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“HE SPRANG UP, AND ONCE MORE LAID A HAND ON THE  
SWINGING LIMB.”

*(See page 17.)*



# HER SAILOR

A Love Story

BY

MARSHALL SAUNDERS

AUTHOR OF

"BEAUTIFUL JOE," "ROSE À CHARLITTE,"

"DEFICIENT SAINTS," ETC.

"Now if you love the southern sea  
And pleasant summer weather;  
Come, let us mount this gallant ship,  
And sail away together."



BOSTON

L. C. PAGE AND COMPANY

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I DEDICATE  
THIS MY FIRST STORY  
TO MY MOST INDULGENT CRITIC,  
THE ONE WHO WILL HAVE MOST PATIENCE WITH ITS  
IMPERFECTIONS, — MY BELOVED MOTHER,  
*Maria Kisborough Freeman Saunders*  
OF HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA.







## PUBLISHERS' NOTE.

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Miss Marshall Saunders's first published work was issued in England in 1889, under the title, "My Spanish Sailor." In the present volume, while not materially altering the plot or action, Miss Saunders has added a number of new incidents, and, as indicated by the change in title, has made some minor changes in the time and scene of the original story.







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# HER SAILOR.

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## CHAPTER I.

'TIS THE UNEXPECTED THAT OCCURS.

“I must wear a willow garland,  
For my love is on the sea;  
He's a gay and gallant rover,  
And I 'spect he's false to me.”

THE particular weeping willow from which this garland was to be gathered was one of the most pliant and flexible in Rubicon Meadows, and it needed to be so; for many years it had been used as a rocking-horse by the slender, graceful girl swinging on one of its drooping branches.

Up and down she went, seated comfortably on one of the lower limbs. The time was seven o'clock in the morning, the season early July, — the period of greatest greenness, freshness, and delicacy in the New England summer.



The girl was putting in the hour that must elapse before her parents should see fit to descend from their chamber and partake of breakfast; and while she swung, her gaze wandered far out over the meadows toward the distant village twinkling and sparkling in the early morning sun.

It was one of the loveliest spots in New Hampshire, but the river and the meadows and the village were an old story to the swinging girl. At present her thoughts were far from her home and her immediate surroundings; and, closing her eyes, she sang more vivaciously than ever:

“ ‘He’s a gay and gallant rover,  
And I ’spect he’s false to me.’ ”

“No, he isn’t,” said a voice, so deep and so sudden that she almost lost her balance, and her hazel eyes flew open with unwonted rapidity.

“Ah!” she said, drawing a long breath, and clinging closer to her shaggy green steed.

While she had been singing the man had come down the dusty road to the old-fashioned house on the meadows, — a man of medium size, possessing a strongly built, powerful frame, a dark face burnt almost black from the sun, and a peculiar gravity of manner that proclaimed even more loudly than



his swarthy complexion some foreign admixture of blood.

The girl in the tree knew who he was. This was the lover of whom she had been singing. He was the offspring of an adventurous Spanish maiden, of Valencia, who had run away from home to marry a love-stricken British sailor; and the girl was American, or considered herself so, and her lover was considerably older than herself. When he removed his hat her eyes went unerringly to his one defect, the unmistakable bald spot in the centre of his thick crop of black hair.

He delighted in startling her. He had crept softly through the gate and under the tree where she was singing; and gazing demurely down at him as he stood with his head a few inches from her face, she remarked, mischievously, "Mr. Owl, do you see the sun? Why did you not wait for the moon?"

He reached up one hand and seized the trembling branch, then with the other gently attempted to draw the light head from its nest of green leaves. It would not come. What an exquisite, waggish, obstinate and altogether adorable little head it was. Yet it would not lie on his shoulder.

"Come down, chickadee," he said, longingly.

"Come up, Mr. Owl," she replied, teasingly.



She was daring him. Both his powerful arms went up to her perch; and, lifting her down, he seated himself on the rustic bench underneath, and smoothed back the fluffy auburn hair from her white forehead.

She sat on his knee with her red lips firmly pressed together. She would not open them. She was obdurate to his appeals for a word, a smile, a caress.

"Go back, then, you obstinate parrot," he said; and, irritably restoring her to her former position, he stretched himself against the back of the seat, and propped his head on his hand.

She drew aside one of the willow's pendant arms. "This — at seven o'clock in the morning! I am shocked."

"I have been up all night," he replied, sleepily.

"All night, — then you were after no good."

"No, no good," he said, uncovering an eye to look at her. "I was drawing out a new will, arranging papers, etc., preparatory to —"

"Suicide?" she asked, in an interested way.

"No, not suicide, matrimony. To-morrow morning at six of the clock I shall cease to be a free man."

The girl looked him all over; she observed curi-



ously the effect of the little flecks of light playing from his dusty walking shoes up to his dark, smooth face with its heavy black moustache. Then she said, hastily, "I shall not marry you to-morrow, Mr. Owl."

"I did not ask you to, Miss Parrot," he said, disagreeably.

The girl resumed her swinging, her eyes this time fixed on the green meadows and the pretty village. For a long time she ignored the presence of her lover as completely as she did that of the huge black watch-dog loitering about the trunk of the tree in expectation of her descent and preparation of his breakfast.

However, she was singing of him, although she did not address him, and as she sang the man's gloomy expression changed to one of complacency, for he was again her theme.

"I remember the black wharves and the slips,  
And the sea-tides tossing free,  
And Spanish sailors with bearded lips,  
And the beauty and mystery of the ships,  
And the magic of the sea.'"

He knew what she was thinking of. Her busy young brain was occupied with its favourite problem, namely, himself. Ever since childhood she had been



told that some mysterious link bound her to him ; that every particle of food she ate, every scrap of clothing she wore, came from him ; that, in short, she belonged to him, and, according to some secret and to her unknown arrangement, her marriage to him was a predetermined, foreordained thing ; that if she refused to submit, she might fall victim to some threatening evil, some shadowy calamity. And now he knew that he had puzzled her, for in the face of all this past instruction he had just made her think he was about to marry some other woman.

“What are you crying about, birdie ?” he asked, suddenly.

Big tear-drops were quietly rolling down her cheeks and over her white dress ; but, without making any effort to wipe them away, she was singing more unconcernedly than ever. This time, however, a different tune and different words.

“He sighed her to death with his sighs so deep,  
He drugged her asleep with his bad black eyes,  
He tangled her up in his stories steep,  
And made her think of him marriagewise.’”

“The dickens ! What are you reciting, you little recluse ?” he inquired, with pardonable brusqueness.

“Something I made up after reading in a book



about a deceitful man who inveigled a poor woman into marriage with him," she replied, not meeting his eyes, and keeping her own fixed on a distant church steeple.

"What are you crying about, birdie?" he repeated again, this time in the softest and gentlest of tones.

"Am I crying?" she asked, innocently brushing a hand over her cheek. "It must be for that poor creature who has to be your wife."

"Has to be, — she has promised me fifty times over;" and, forgetting his fatigue, he sprang up, and once more laid a hand on the swinging limb.

The girl tried to start it. It would not move, and she exclaimed, imperiously, "Please take your hand off my horse's bridle."

The horse was still detained, and, refusing to meet the steady glance of his eyes, she gazed away out over the meadows, and sang, waggishly :

"I'll not marry you, kind sir, she said, sir, she said, sir, she said,

I'll not marry you, kind sir, she said,  
Because you are too lordly.'"

"Lordly," he muttered, "I am your slave. Look here," and he cautiously lifted a damp curl from her



forehead. "You are bathed in perspiration. So much for being a woman, for jumping at conclusions, and landing in a paroxysm of jealousy."

The girl was forced to call in her wandering gaze. He would stand there until doomsday if she did not; and, with a provoking uplift of her light brows, she looked down into the two black penetrating eyes that pierced her face like lances.

"It was jealousy," he said, with satisfaction. "You thought for an instant that I was speaking of some other woman."

"I was not jealous. I was glad."

"Yes, you were," he said, doggedly, "and I am glad you were—and listen. Circumstances have arisen that make it necessary for me to give you the protection of my name. You trust me fully—"

"Not that far!" she exclaimed, measuring off an inch on one of her pink fingers.

He laughed, seized the finger, and carried it to his lips. "I cannot explain, but we must be married at once. It will only be an empty ceremony. You are not ready yet to bow your wilful young neck under the yoke of matrimony."

"I shall not have a phantom marriage," she said, indignantly. "Go away, you bad sea-dog."

"Then let it be a real one," he said, eagerly.



"Give up your will to me. Stop being a wilful spoiled child of a *fiancée*, and become a loving, sensible little wife. You can if you want to. There is nothing but the frail barrier of your will between us. Sometimes I think I would like to break it, but —" suddenly pausing. "What a fool I am! One might as well rhapsodise to a marble statue as to you, icy, passionless child that you are. Perhaps when you get away from your present dead-and-alive surroundings —"

"Perhaps what?" she inquired, and her beautiful eyebrows again went into the air.

"You will live with me, make a home for me, act sane instead of insane," he said, shortly.

"What do you mean by getting away from my dead-and-alive surroundings?" she inquired.

"It means that after that ceremony to-morrow, which will make you feel neither maid, wife, nor widow, I want to take you away from here. You would like to travel?"

"To travel, — to see new places, new people? I, who have not even been allowed to go to Boston?" and she stretched out the flowing white sleeves of her gown, like wings. "What a question to ask me!"

"You could not travel," he said, gloomily. "There were reasons."



"I won't believe there were reasons till I know them," she said, obstinately. "You have kept me shut up here. You, — not poor papa and mamma, — until I am so tired of everything, so sick of the same old roads, the same old people, the same girls and boys, even the same sticks and stones. I began to think I was never to leave it. I was to stay here till I died, died, died."

"Well, now is your chance."

"I don't wish any chance this way. I wish to go alone."

He released the branch and threw himself down again on the seat. "You are going with me."

"Am I going to England?"

"Yes."

"Am I going on the *Merrimac*? Am I really to have a voyage?"

"Yes and yes. Do you think I would let you sail under any other man's orders?"

She made no reply for a time, and seemed to be fully occupied in following the windings of the serpent-like Rubicon.

"You need not pose as my wife, — that is, you need not occupy yourself with me. Every man in command of a ship is accustomed to have solitary young persons travelling in his charge. I shall not impose



my society upon you — not unless you request it," he added, slowly.

She had traced the Rubicon until it blended with the horizon, and now she looked into his resolved face. "What do you propose to do with me when we reach England?"

"I propose to follow your wishes to the last degree," he said, with weary gallantry. "If you wish to stay in England I will find some suitable place for you; if you wish to come back with me —" a short satisfied laugh finished the sentence.

"You think I will come back with you," she said, uneasily.

"I know you will," he replied, with a conceit so marked that her quick temper was aroused in a flash. "I shall not go one step with you," she cried, petulantly.

"Why not?" he asked, coolly.

"Because you will make me — make me —" She choked and stammered, and could not proceed.

"Make you what?" he said, gravely. "I shall not force you to be my wife, if that is what you mean. I hope — I want you to consent to live with me sometime; but I give you my word that, if you do not come willingly, you come not at all."



"It isn't that," she cried, trying to stamp her foot, but only agitating it violently in the unresisting air. "I know I will give in, I know I will go, I know you will make me mind you — you will make me glad to do it. Oh, I am so angry!"

She was indeed angry, and the pink fingers were now raging among the willow leaves, and stripping them from their twigs. "And you don't love me," she went on, furiously, "you only love having your own detestable way."

"So you think I don't love you," he said, meditatively.

"Of course you don't. You never blush when you see me, you never stammer when you talk. You take everything for granted. Other men don't act like that."

"What do I want to blush for? I have done nothing to be ashamed of," he said, doggedly, "and why should I stammer? I have got a straight tongue in my head, and how do you know what other men do?"

"Don't I read books, — don't I see them? There's one boy in Rubicon Meadows turns perfectly purple when he sees me. I don't like having known you ever since I was a baby. I wish you would go away and let me alone," and she sulkily executed a move-



ment on the branch by which her back was turned on him.

"All right ; I have dangled about you long enough. Now I will give place to the Rubicon Meadows boys. You have played fast and loose with me about our engagement, and I don't believe you ever intend to marry me. If you don't call me back before I get to that second row of gooseberry-bushes you will never see me again."

"You don't mean 'never,'" said the girl, hotly, over her shoulder ; "you're tired and cross, and you've lost your last remnant of temper. You're in a pretty state of mind to come proposing to a girl."

"Good-bye, Nina," he continued, calmly. "Tell your next admirer that I said you were a nice little girl, but you have a d— a dragon of a temper."

"Good-bye, monster," she called after him, as he took up his hat and strode away. "You're a nice man, but you're getting stout and middle-aged, and you're a great deal older than I am, and the bald spot in the middle of your head is increasing, and I just hate you — I hate you."

Wincing under the dainty brutality of her personal allusions, the man clapped his hat on his head and quickened his steps. His gravity of manner was all



gone. No one in the world had power to stir him as this slip of a girl had.

She watched him going, dashing the tears from her eyes as she watched. He had passed the rose-bush, the ugly rose-bush that never bore anything but worm-eaten roses. She wished that a tempest would come and tear it from its roots. He had stumbled over the big mossy stone by the well, the miserable stone on which every one tripped. She wished he would fall down and break a limb. He had passed the first row of gooseberry-bushes. Why did they not stretch out their thorny arms and tear his clothes?"

Now he had reached the second row of gooseberries. "Pirate!" she shrieked, wrathfully, after him.

He would not reply to her. He was fumbling with the fastening of the gate, — the old-fashioned fastening that her father was always forgetting to have mended. She hoped that he might be detained there an hour. No, a gate would not stop him. He had placed a hand on it, and had vaulted over. Now he had disappeared.

She would run to the gate to see the last of him, and she slipped down the tree-trunk like a lithe little cat. "That stupid fastening!" and she furiously rattled the gate. Then she climbed over. She would



follow him just for fun — not with the idea of appeasing him.

For some seconds she trotted silently after him down the dusty road. Then she called gently, "Esteban !"

He did not turn. He had said the second row of gooseberry-bushes, and now he was crossing the Rubicon. And he always kept his word.

"Esteban," she called, wildly, "come back ! You have dropped your pocketbook."

Again he did not look around, but she saw his hand go up to his side. He must have heard her.

She tried again. "Esteban, I wish to tell you something — something important."

He would not turn. He did not turn until he heard a heavy splash in the river.

"That tiresome girl," — and, choking an exclamation, he strode back to the bridge. She had jumped into the river to annoy him. No, she had not gone herself, she had sent the big black dog who was swimming composedly about. The fool — he would do anything she told him. She was in hiding herself, — he could see her brown head under one of the seats of the bridge.

The tired man flung himself down on the opposite seat, and fixed his eyes on the head. How brown,



nay, how yellow it looked. He got up and peered down at it. It was not his little sweetheart curled up there. He was gazing at a bunch of yellow flowers.

He turned hastily to the river. There was her cap floating on the water. He became sick and faint. There had been only one splash, yet where was she? Every tender memory of his life, every ambition for the future, clustered around that brown head. He would go and get her. He would search in the grass of the river bank, he would — his head fell on his arm, and a strange, delicious forgetfulness crept over him. He was going to faint for the first time in his life. He struggled against it, first violently, then feebly, then his head fell on his breast and he knew no more.



## CHAPTER II.

SCHOOLMA'AM AND WIFE, BUT NEVER A MOTHER.

WHILE the sailor and the young girl were having their conversation in the garden, two people who were intensely interested in their movements were taking their breakfast in one of the back rooms of the plain, old-fashioned house.

One of them was a fat, testy man, with large and prominent watery gray eyes, who was irritably chipping the top from an egg, and varying this occupation by casting frequent and semi-displeased glances through the open window. Mr. Israel Danvers was master of this house, owner of the principal store in the village across the meadows, and husband of the woman with the large, cool, comfortable face, who sat opposite him pouring his coffee.

"I wonder what that Fordyce is up to now?" he muttered, with a whole volley of glances outside.

"I don't know," responded Mrs. Danvers, tranquilly, "but I imagine it's something important. Otherwise he'd wait for lamplight."



"What do you mean by important?"

"I mean marriage."

Mr. Danvers fretfully scattered his egg-shell on the table-cloth. "Nina is too young to marry."

"She is eighteen."

"She is too young, I say. She is nothing but a butterfly."

"She is certainly frivolous," said Mrs. Danvers, with a judicial air.

"Would you have her a suspicious old woman?" retorted her husband. "She's got the b-best heart and the s-sweetest disposition, — she's a fine girl," he concluded, lamely. He could not be eloquent, but he felt deeply, and his prominent eyes watered in a sincere and affectionate manner as he went on with his breakfast.

"Where's my coffee?" he asked, presently.

Mrs. Danvers started slightly, and passed him the forgotten cup.

"You've half filled it with sugar," he said, "I guess you were dreaming when you poured it."

Again she said nothing, and quietly poured him another cup; but he persisted, "What was you thinking of, Melinda?"

"I was pondering on the mysteries of the law of mutual selection, if you must know," she said, calmly.



He surveyed her suspiciously. She had been a school-teacher before she married him, and her education had been greatly superior to his own. Comprehending his state of mind, she went on, kindly : "With regard to Fordyce and Nina. He lands in a state where there are one hundred and fifty thousand more women than men. The most of those women have good eyes, ears, noses, fine heads of hair, yet he comes rushing over the border into New Hampshire."

"I'll venture to say there isn't another Nina in Massachusetts," said the fat man.

"I agree with you there. She is unique."

"Do you think she likes Fordyce well enough to marry him?" he asked, anxiously.

Mrs. Danvers became thoughtful, until an impatient movement from her husband forced an opinion from her. "I don't know, Israel. I guess she likes him better than she pretends to, and you've no occasion to worry about her marrying him. Wild horses wouldn't make her do anything she didn't want to do; but I don't know all her mind about Fordyce. She understands me better than I understand her."

Surprised at this unlooked-for admission, he said, agreeably, "She's a clever little coot."

"Clever, — she's the smartest girl I ever saw.



She's too smart. I'm afraid Fordyce will have trouble with her."

"Clever, how clever?" interposed Mr. Danvers, up in arms for his favourite. "You don't mean to say she's sneaky?"

"No, not sneaky," said Mrs. Danvers, in deep thought; "not sneaky, but shy and nervous, and pretending she's got plenty of coolness when she hasn't, and more one for getting her way secretly than openly. And she's full of tricks and moods and quirks of all kinds. You don't understand her, Israel."

Mr. Danvers did not know whether to be gratified or annoyed by his wife's expansive state of mind. She had never before spoken just so freely of their adopted daughter. "I don't try to understand her," he said, doubtfully. "I just take her as she is."

"Fordyce don't. He wants to know every thought in her mind," proceeded Mrs. Danvers, "and thinks he knows them, too, but sometimes he's too sure."

"He's too short with her, too short," observed Mr. Danvers, pettishly. "He ought to take into account that she's got a will of her own."

"He's a primitive man; he'd kill any one that took her away from him. You see he's got nothing but her."



Mr. Danvers was silent. He did not know what she meant by a primitive man.

"He could step right out into the woods and live with savages," explained Mrs. Danvers; "and if he wanted a woman he'd knock her down with his club and carry her off to his cave with the best of them."

Mr. Danvers treated her to an exhibition of open-mouthed astonishment and disapproval. "Melinda, are you crazy to talk of such goings-on?"

"Men don't do such things nowadays," she said, soothingly, "but there's a heap of wild nature in a good many of us. I guess you'd like to turn Fordyce out this very minute."

"You bet your life I would," said the fat man, with energy, and without premeditation. "I'd send him flying down that road. He's too old for Nina. Let her marry one of the boys around here."

"Do you know what she calls the Rubicon Meadows boys?" asked Mrs. Danvers, dryly.

"No, but I know she don't mean a third of what she says."

"Giggling colts, Israel. Colts, just think of it. You see Fordyce has a kind of manner of knowing everything, and he's out in the world. Then he comes stealing in her life like a mystery, and she likes that. I guess we've got to let him have her.



We could'nt stop him, anyway. He'll tame her and she'll do him good. I expect he's mortal blue at times."

Mr. Danvers relapsed into sullenness, tinged with vindictiveness. He understood his wife well enough to know that the burden of her talk was the duty of resignation. "You've always been hard on that girl," he said, irascibly.

"Hard on her, Israel! Seventeen years I've had her, and there isn't a soul in Rubicon Meadows besides you that guesses she isn't our own child. How's that for being hard on her?"

Melinda's eyes were sparkling. She looked ten years younger than she had before their conversation began, and he abruptly drifted into memories of bygone days. So far back did he go that it was some time before he murmured, absently: "Howsomever, you've been well paid for it."

"Paid for it," she repeated, with asperity, "there are some things money can't pay for."

This was a statement he could not deny, yet in some indefinable and inexplicable way he felt that she had been slightly lacking in her duty to the lovable butterfly outside. Melinda did not admire the pretty creature as he did; and at this very instant her unusual outspokenness and animation arose



from her acute suspicion that their vivacious charge was about spreading her wings for flight.

She was a good woman, though, this wife of his, and she was only a trifle queer. However, everybody seemed queer but himself, and he sank into bitter and resigned reflection, and muttered, almost inaudibly, "After all said and done, we've got to take folks after the pattern they're made, and not as we'd make 'em over."

Mrs. Danvers saw that the tide was turning. "Israel," she said, solemnly shaking her head at him, "no one will ever know what I've gone through with that child. When she was laid in my arms a little, motherless babe, and her tiny fingers curled around mine, my heart went out to her. She's got it yet, but she's been greatly provoking, and you've made too much of her, Israel, you know you have."

"I'll not deny I've favoured her some," he said, gruffly.

"I've never spoken about it before," she replied, nervously, "and I'll never say it again ; but I've been jealous of that girl, Israel, real jealous ; and yet, with it all, you'll not miss her as much when she goes as I will. A man gets over things. A woman broods."

Mr. Danvers weakly toyed with a morsel of bread.

"I've got some of the mother spirit," his wife went



on, with tears in her eyes. "Enough of it, thank the Lord, to make me sorry to have her go. We've got to be lonely, Israel, real lonely, after she leaves, and I'm glad to have this talk first."

Mr. Danvers was embarrassed, exceedingly embarrassed; and for the first time in his life was willing to acknowledge that possibly he might have done wrong, possibly he might have indulged too much the pink and white gipsy in the muslin frock outside. However, it was not befitting his position as head of the household to eat too large a piece of humble pie at one time, so he said, protestingly, "As for jealousy, how you women run on. You're just like wildfire. Now I've liked that little girl just as if she was my own, but not like you, Melinda. A man's wife is different. I wonder you speak of such a thing, and I a deacon in the church."

"I wasn't speaking of anything but your acting like a foolish father," she said, indignantly. "Of course you'd never think of comparing Nina to me. She's only a baby, and whatever happens, Israel Danvers, I hope you'll remember I am your wedded wife. I know I'm getting old —"

She broke down, and tears finished the sentence.

Mr. Danvers was aghast. He had not seen her cry for twenty years, — not since her mother died.



Getting up with difficulty, he waddled to her end of the table, and, gingerly tapping her shoulder, ejaculated, "So, so, there, — so, so."

Mrs. Danvers wiped her eyes and gave him a slight push. "I'm not a cow, Israel, and go back to your seat. There's some one coming."

Nina was quietly slipping in through the window. Approaching the foot of the table, she took Mr. Danvers's bald head in her embrace and kissed him sweetly and fervently. Then, nearing the head of the table, she pecked at Mrs. Danvers's cheek in an affectionate but perfunctory manner.

"Here's your mush," said Mrs. Danvers, uncovering a small bowl. "Israel, pass the cream; where's Captain Fordyce, Nina?"

"I left him on the bridge. I think he must be waiting for the moon," she said, seriously.

Her lips were pale, and there was a nervous expression about her eyes, and Mrs. Danvers said to herself, "They've had a quarrel."

"Ever see him by daylight before, pussy?" asked Mr. Danvers.

"No, daddy."

"Must look kind of queer."

"He looks older," said the girl, with her spoon poised over her mush. She had fallen into a reverie



and was gazing fixedly out the window. After a time she roused herself and said: "He had a faint turn on the bridge."

"He — faint?" said Mrs. Danvers, incredulously.

"Yes," said Nina, with a queer look, and dropping her eyes. "He has been working hard and not eating much, and the sun shone on his head and made him dizzy. I thought, mamma, you might give him some medicine."

"I'll give him some if he'll take it," said Mrs. Danvers, grimly, "but he's not one to be coddled. What is he coming in the daytime for? Does he want anything particular?"

Nina turned quickly and gave her an owlish stare, — a stare so sudden that Mrs. Danvers had not time to avert her own gray eyes shining with so glad a light.

"Would you let him marry me right away, mamma, if he wanted to?"

"Well," hesitated Mrs. Danvers, "your case isn't like others. Of course your engagement has been standing a good while."

"Does he want to marry you right off?" asked Mr. Danvers, sharply.

"Yes, dear daddy," said the girl, softly, "but you won't let me go, will you?"



Mr. Danvers tried to speak, but only uttered a low, confused rumble like that of a helpless animal. He could do nothing, and the girl turned to her adopted mother. Her curiously expectant glance was not met. Mrs. Danvers's head was bent over her plate. There was no protest there. The marriage must take place.

Nina, having fully satisfied herself on this point, reached out her hand for the sugar-bowl; and, carefully dusting her oatmeal, poured cream on it, and proceeded to take her breakfast in silence and composure.

"Why, there's Captain Fordyce," said Mrs. Danvers, suddenly. "Come in, come in," she went on, addressing the sailor, who stood by the low, open window. "You must want some breakfast."

They were all staring at him, but he looked his usual self, and, with a brief salutation to his host and hostess, he entered the room and seated himself at the table.

"Have some hot drink," said Mrs. Danvers, passing him a cup. "It will make you feel better."

His gaze went suspiciously to Nina, and the faintest and most evanescent of blushes passed over his dark face. "I had no dinner yesterday," he said, gruffly, "and the racket on the wharf was deafening."



"Did you have a prosperous voyage from England?" asked Mrs. Danvers, amiably.

"Yes."

"And an agreeable company of passengers?"

"Fair, — I didn't see much of them."

"Were there any nice, nice girls on board?" lisped Nina, in her infantine fashion.

"Plenty," he said unexpectedly, fixing her with an indulgent stare.

She did not address him again during the meal, although she listened attentively to every one of the curt sentences with which he favoured her parents. He was always grave, almost severe with them. Why was he not with them, with the rest of the world, as he was with her? Why at her slightest word did he lose his air of command, soften his tone, and adjust himself to any mood she happened to be in? Was it only because he loved her, or was there some other reason? It was certainly very puzzling, and the man across the table, who was intently following her meditations, smiled to himself, as he heard the perturbed little sigh with which she always concluded them.

Mr. Danvers scarcely spoke, and the others rarely addressed him; for they plainly felt that the atmosphere about him was somewhat electrical.



"Poor old fatty," soliloquised Captain Fordyce, "he's blue to think of losing his little playmate. I'm sorry for him," and he gazed approvingly at the stout man. "Madam there loves Nina because she is a dressed-up doll, representing duty and dollars; and he favoured his hostess with a sardonic glance. "Schoolma'am and wife, but never a mother. Time my little wench was out of this."

Mr. Danvers finished his breakfast, then rose in sulky silence. While Nina ran to get his hat and cane, he addressed Captain Fordyce :

"So you want to steal our child?"

"I do."

The fat man choked back some emotion. "Is she willing to go?"

"Yes."

Mr. Danvers brought his plump fist down on the table with noiseless emphasis, and threw a defiant glance at his wife. "Well, mark this, she's always got a home here if anything befalls you. And don't ever force the truth on her. I wouldn't for a thousand dollars have her know she isn't our child."

"And I wouldn't for a thousand more," said Captain Fordyce, coolly.

"Would not this be a good time to inform her of



the true state of affairs?" interposed Mrs. Danvers. "Is not truth always better than error?"

Captain Fordyce frowned at her, Mr. Danvers ejaculated, "Hold your tongue, Melinda;" but nothing further could be said, for at that instant Nina came gliding back.

"Here is your hat, daddy dear," then, tucking her hand under his arm, she left the room with him.

Mrs. Danvers followed the two with a peculiar glance, and Captain Fordyce, seeing it, smiled.

"Are her traps in order for travelling?" he asked.

"Yes," she replied, laconically.

"I will take her away to-morrow."

She looked slightly ashamed, and fell into a silence that lasted until Nina returned, when she wandered away into the kitchen.

The girl had been standing a long time at the gate watching the sorrowful lines of the substantial figure plodding across the meadows. Her face was flushed and disturbed; and, scarcely knowing what she did, she seated herself at the table and made a blind onslaught on a loaf of bread.

"Here, give me that knife, you will cut yourself," said Captain Fordyce. He laid a thin slice on her plate, then, in a state of utter beatification, for he had had his own way in every particular during a



short conversation they had had on the bridge, he sat watching her eat it.

"Three days from now you will be having your breakfast on the *Merrimac*," he said, softly.

Nina made a wry face and tried to bury her face in her coffee-cup. He laughed, and, having finished his breakfast, got up and strolled about the room, looking at the pictures hung on the walls.

A quarter of an hour later Nina was alone in the hall with him. He had exchanged a calm good-bye with Mrs. Danvers, after having promised to return to dinner. His leave-taking with his *fiancée* promised to be more lengthy.

"Oh, do make haste," she said, inhospitably handing him his hat. "I have my canaries to do, and the dog and cat to feed, and ever so many things beside."

"Tell me again that you are sorry for being naughty," he said, gently, "for throwing your cap in the water, and hiding in the rushes."

"I'm sorry I was sorry," she said, stoutly; but at the same time, lest she should hurt his feelings, she gave his fingers a gentle, a very gentle pressure.

"You angel," he said, not rapturously nor passionately, but rather as if he were stating a very commonplace and threadbare fact.



She dropped his fingers as suddenly as if they had turned to red-hot metal in her grasp, and turned her head very far away from him.

"And you will find time among your multitudinous occupations to help your mamma pack," he went on.

"I don't think I will go," she said, feebly. "I think I am going to change my mind again."

"All right," he said, taking out his watch. "I will give you a minute. Shall I go or stay? You must make up your mind decidedly before to-morrow. There must be no fooling with sacred things."

She roguishly bent her face over the watch.

"Time's up," he said; "good-bye."

With a wilful shrug of her shoulders she took the watch in her hand. "Let me put it back."

He stood patiently while she restored it to its place, and insinuated her thumb and finger in another pocket. "What's this?" she observed, drawing out a slip of newspaper.

"Give it to me," he said, trying to take it from her.

But she was too quick for him, and darting to the staircase read aloud the headings of the slip she held in her hand. "Boston Dustman Refused Seventeen Times by His Lady-love, Who Was a Rag-picker. Upon the Occasion of His Eight-



eenth Refusal Slapped Her in the Face, Whereupon She Promptly Accepted Him."

"Horrid man! I would have slapped back!" exclaimed Nina, indignantly.

Captain Fordyce was grinning broadly. "Here, — give me that," and he restored it to his pocket. "It brought me luck."

"Luck with me?" she cried.

"Yes, birdie."

She was about to dart away, but he held her gently by the arm, and, stroking his moustache in a meditative way, said: "One day, years ago, I remember seeing you dragged out of bed at midnight — a rosy, tumbled heap — to say 'How d'ye do' to a rough young sailor, whom you kissed and were not at all afraid of. That was our first merry meeting, and every one since has been flavoured, seasoned, sanctified, what you will, by the same charming salute. You are not going to cut me off this time as you did this morning?" and he brought his black, teasing eyes close to her face.

"I made up for it on the bridge," she said, hastily. "Let me go, you — you Spaniard."

This was her choicest word of abuse, but it did not take effect now. "No, you didn't," he said, obstinately. "Now, Nina!"



The faint, the very faint tone of command in his voice warned her that this was one of the occasions on which she must not refuse him. But she drew her hand across her lips afterward, and murmured something about salt to her eyeballs.

He looked down at the orbs in question. "Those are bright, happy eyes, child. You don't mean one-half you say ;" and with this impeachment on her veracity he took his leave, and hurried away in the direction of the village.



## CHAPTER III.

### SHE WHO FIGHTS AND RUNS AWAY.

AT the foot of the Danvers garden was a grassy field, and through the field ran a laughing, purling brook hurrying to join the sinuous Rubicon winding through the meadow beyond.

The brook was a favourite resort of Nina's ; but now, at eleven o'clock at night, she was supposed to be in bed ; and, deprived of the cheering light of her presence, her lover rambled alone on the grassy bank. No, not her lover, — her new-made husband. There had been a slight change in his plans. Thanks to his business activity and habits of despatch, he had so hurried these slow country people that he had been able to have his marriage ceremony performed on the afternoon of his day of arrival, instead of postponing it until the following morning.

Now as he walked to and fro smoking and talking to himself, he chuckled delightedly. "That old white-haired magistrate looked scared. He will not get over his fright for a week. However, Nina won't



have to get up so early in the morning. We can take a later train to the city. Poor little thing, — what the dickens am I pitying her for?" and he paused, impatiently. "She's safely married and provided for. She's glad to get out of this — never in the world would have settled down here attached to one of these lumbering youths. Good enough fellows," he went on, thoughtfully, "better than I am; but she's too fine for them, too high-strung. No material for a farmer's wife there. Now we'll see her character unfold. I must be patient with her."

He stopped short and stared up at the sky. He had one instant of an exquisite and sympathetic comprehension of the faults and beauties in the character of a fellow creature. Then his exalted expression faded, and he shook himself, impatiently. "Pshaw! what a black expanse! A jetty pincushion stuck full of pins. Darkest night this month. So I am married," and he resumed his walk. "Where are my complex emotions? I am only glad I've got her to have and to hold and to win for my wife. Curious little fox, pretending to be frightened, and giving me the cold shoulder all day. She will come around in time, and make a home for me. She's the cutest thing in the world, as these Americans say. She will keep me amused," and he laughed aloud,



and waved his cigar like a small red torch in the darkness.

“I must sell some of that railway stock,” he went on, presently, “our expenses will increase now ; for once out of her nest my bird will want new feathers,” and his mind wandered off to practical and financial affairs.

In the midst of his hurry through the day, he had found time to take a nap, and his sleepiness and faintness of the morning had passed away. Occasionally he glanced in the direction of the little black village gone sound asleep, where was his inn for the night ; but he was not ready to go to it yet. The soft evening air allured him, and, with the luxurious appreciation of an alternate seafarer and dweller in cities, he revelled in the seldom enjoyed pleasure of a country night with its subdued and muffled noises.

“Jove ! I like those land smells,” he muttered, “earthy and sweet they are and unlike the sea, though for all time give me the dash of briny. And the noises—let me count them,” and he paused again and elevated one ear more than the other. “Distant dogs barking—when do the brutes sleep ? Cow bawling—her calf has been taken away ; owl tooting like a fog-horn. Brats of birds stirring in their nests, one fellow crowding the other—just



heard them swear in twitter," and he gazed into the sombre mass of an elm above him. "Engine shrieking — fast train for Boston. Footsteps pattering — hello! from Danvers's house, too. Naughty Bridget — didn't Nina say the grocer had a weakness for her fried cakes? But surely they don't walk and talk as late as this from that exemplary household. However, I'll not spoil her fun," and he moved back in the shelter of the tree.

A minute later he resumed his place by the stepping-stones. Dark as it was, he knew that slender, white figure emerging from the embrace of night.

"Nina!" he ejaculated, in a fond and foolish tone, "my little girl — coming for me!"

She gave a guilty start and drew back.

"What are you carrying?" he went on; and, approaching her, he took a small black bag from her hand.

"My — my things for the night," she stammered.

"Are you walking in your sleep?" he asked, in a curious tone.

"N-no; I am going to spend the night with a friend, — a girl I know. I am very fond of her. She lives across the meadows."

"Indeed; shall I see you there before I go to the village?" and he politely threw away his cigar.



Nina hesitated. This was not quite what she wished, and he went on: "Perhaps you do not care for me to see where you are going?"

"No, I don't," she said, in a low voice.

"I suppose you are planning to come back in the morning and take the train with me?" he asked, in a livelier way.

"Perhaps I had better not," she said, evasively.

"By Jove! I believe she's running away," he inwardly exclaimed. Outwardly he was cool. "Did you tell Mrs. Danvers about your ardent wish to see this friend?"

"No," she murmured.

"You must think a heap of her to be rambling off this time of night to see her," he went on. "Pray do not let me detain you."

The girl swung her foot to and fro as if feeling for the first stepping-stone; and yet she probably knew perfectly well where it was. Then she said, with a queer catch in her voice, "It looks blacker over there."

She had been brought up in the country. She was no more afraid of the darkness than he was, but he said, agreeably, "You want me to go with you?"

"N-not all the way. I don't want you to see where I go."



There was something peculiar in her voice, something peculiar in her manner, and the puzzled man knit his brows. There had not been quite enough consternation when she discovered him. She was acting, but acting badly. He would edge up on the stage a bit, and he went nearer and peered at her downcast head.

What he saw decided and enlightened him ; for he suddenly choked back a laugh, and retreated into the deeper gloom of the tree, from whence a voice presently issued in pretended severity : " Nina, why did you marry me to-day ? "

Now the girl was happy. She left the stepping-stone on which she had placed both her small feet and resumed her footing on dry ground. " I married you because I promised to do so. You have been very good to me ever since I was a little child. I am grateful to you, and if there is any profit to you in my marriage, I am willing for you to have it. "

" Profit, " he muttered to himself. " Good heavens, Miss Parrot, what do you mean ? This is something you have learned by rote. " However, he kept his wonder to himself, and said aloud and still more sternly :

" Having married me, why are you running away ? "

" I am running away because I am not pleased with you, " she said, bravely and glibly. " You treat



me as if I were a baby. I am grown up, and am entitled to some respect and consideration, particularly now that I am your wife. I wish to be consulted about things. When I get on board the *Merrimac* I do not wish to be told I must do this and I must do that."

He did not speak for a minute. She supposed that he was trying to subdue his wrath, but he was going over a few sentences to himself in a puzzled fashion. "What is that fellow's name, — Jerrold, is it? — says, 'While they're maids they're mild as milk. Make 'em wives and they set their backs against their marriage certificates and defy you.'"

"I am no better than a puppet," said the girl excitedly.

"Puppet, that's good!" said the seafaring man, softly, "and glory to Cupid, she's getting stirred up. I dare say I do boss her."

"You have stated your grievance," he said, in a low growl; "what redress do you ask?"

"I want you to — to let me do as I like about — about going or staying with you."

"You want to frighten me out of my senses to keep me from making love to you, little witch," he reflected, "and you're using this girl as a screen. I see," he said aloud, "your present most earnest



desire is to go and visit this girl you love so much, and let me go away without you. Then after I have had a trip to England and back, which will give me ample time to meditate on the folly of my ways, I may come and get you."

She did not reply for a minute. "Seems to be having some difficulty with her organs of speech," soliloquised the man behind the tree. "Just for contrariness, I'll check. Have your own way," he said, with well-assumed surliness. "I wouldn't take you with me to-morrow for a thousand pounds."

The girl was terrified. She had gone too far. She had roused the ugly, black, Spanish temper of whose existence she was well aware, but of which she had never seen an exhibition. "Esteban," she said, piteously, "I don't want to hurt your feelings; if you would only let me do a little more as I want to."

"Why didn't you tell me all this before?" he uttered, in a sepulchral voice; "why did you wait to blight our marriage day?"

"I—I couldn't get courage," she stammered. "I—I am a little frightened of you."

The night air was so clear that he could hear every one of her fluttering whispers, yet he pretended that he had not caught them, and launched



into a raging philippic against the ingratitude of women in general.

It accomplished her confusion. She had plainly overstepped the limit set around his forbearance, and, dropping her bag on the grass, she put both hands up to her eyes.

She was crying — the darling — and his heart was bleeding for her, but he wished to find out the particulars of this night excursion. “You have deceived me, — you pretended that you would go away with me in the morning.”

“So I am going,” she cried, desperately. “I am only in fun.”

He paused in his ravings. “In fun — ”

“Yes ; I am only making believe to go to see that girl. I watched you come down here. I am not going to leave you, 'Steban, really. Look in that bag — there isn't even a toothbrush in it. It's only stuffed with paper. I am sick of this quiet place. I will be good if you will take me to-morrow.”

“Never — false, deceitful one ! ” he began, in tones made hollow by a hand placed over his mouth, but his tones were too hollow, too mournful. He was not a first-class actor, and she was too sharp to be deceived any longer.

She dropped her hands from her eyes. She could



not see him, but she could plainly hear that, being now discovered, he had given way to his torments of suppressed laughter.

“You mean, mean thing!” she cried, wrathfully; then she wheeled suddenly, threw the bag in his direction, and rushed off through the darkness.

He laughed till the tears came to his eyes, then he groped after the bag. It was as she had said, stuffed with paper. “Poor little soul,” he muttered, “I would have comforted her if she had stayed. She wanted to show me that she was going to take command in this matrimonial alliance, but she didn’t come out well from her first battle. Deserted her colours and ran.”



## CHAPTER IV.

### RUBICON MEADOWS ARE LEFT BEHIND.

WITH a face as pale as the handkerchief pressed against it, Nina stood gazing into a corner of the waiting-room in the diminutive railway station of Rubicon Meadows.

Mrs. Danvers had broken down. She was in a pitiable state of confusion, and Mr. Danvers, with his round face in a snarl, was trying to comfort her.

"What hash these women are made of!" grumbled Captain Fordyce to himself. "She wanted Nina to go, she wants her to stay, she will break her heart in earnest if I leave her, and break it in appearance if I take her. Come, Nina, let us go out to the platform, the train will be here in three minutes."

"'Steban, I can't leave her—I oughtn't to," murmured the girl, miserably.

"All right—stay, then."

"Mamma, mamma, I will stay with you," and she ran and threw her arms around the weeping figure.



Captain Fordyce stared at them from under his black brows. An instantaneous and almost imperceptible change passed over the sorrowing woman. He knew it from the movement of her shoulder-blades.

Nina felt it, was confused, and looked around at him.

“Good-bye,” he said, calmly; “wire me if you change your mind before to-morrow noon. If not, I will run up and get you next trip.”

Mrs. Danvers’s sobs ceased. She had been crying at intervals all the morning. This was the climax, “Nina,” she said, in a muffled voice.

The girl put her ear to her lips. Captain Fordyce could not hear what was said, but he could make a shrewd guess. The duty of a wife was to leave father and mother, and cleave to her husband.

Mr. Danvers whirled his ponderous form around, and, winking more vigorously than ever, stepped to the doorway. This was final. Up to the last he had hoped that his wife’s grief would continue, that Captain Fordyce would relent and would leave them their child. They were to lose her. He must go home and face that empty chair.

Mrs. Danvers had straightened herself up, and was pulling down her veil. Captain Fordyce was



whisking Nina out to the train bearing down upon Rubicon Meadows with a rush and a roar befitting a monster that would steal children from the very arms of their parents.

Mrs. Danvers had ceased crying now, but Nina had taken up the dismal performance, and was blindly waving farewells from the window of a parlour-car. Now they were gone; that chapter in life's story was finished, — a lively, eventful chapter, — and now began one unblessed by youth, mischief, and beauty. Mr. Danvers was getting old, and, placing himself by the side of his wife, he plodded wearily homeward. Perhaps if he had married some other woman he might have had children of his own, — but what diabolical thoughts were these crowding his head, and he a deacon in the church; with an inward and horrified shudder he offered his arm to his wife.

She accepted the unusual attention. Her livelier feminine imagination pictured to her a new quiet and a new restfulness and happiness — yes, happiness — that were about to settle on them. It was all for the best, — she could say it through her tears, — although how they should miss that little witch!

Captain Fordyce sat quietly beside the witch.



Her parents had been snatched from her. She was turning her bereaved gaze to the town. The shops, the houses, the churches, sprang past. She had only the meadows left, the beautiful Rubicon meadows, with their languidly flowing river, — the place where her little feet had roamed since childhood, and now it, too, was gone. She was out in the open country away from the scenes of her childhood. She was fairly launched on the journey of life. Was it to be a happy one? Where would it end? When would she come back? Perhaps never.

She must be torn to pieces with nervous terror, such terror as probably agitated trembling brides for the first few hours after leaving the parental roof, and in deep and intense sympathy her husband gently touched the tiny gloved hand lying on her lap.

He wished to see her whole face, not a section of pink cheek.

She moved her head abruptly, and presented to him not tears and dejection, but a pouting mouth and a frowning brow. Her agitation was gone. She was worrying over some other matter.

“What’s wrong with you?” he asked, wonderingly.

She favoured him with one of her indignant stares.



"That woman is not my mother, why don't you tell me who she is?"

Captain Fordyce was aghast. Then he looked over his shoulder. He was afraid the man behind had heard her low, wrathful tones. Where in the name of all that was wonderful had she picked up this information? He opened his mouth to speak, then closed it feebly; he must have time to think over this statement, and make up his mind what to answer her; so with an incoherent excuse he left her, and hurried in the direction of the smoking-car.

Before they reached Boston he was again beside her; but he made no effort at conversation, and as if she had forgotten her remark to him, she occupied herself by an animated observation of everything about her. She was intensely interested, intensely pleased, and watched his every movement like a delighted little cat.

"Are we going to stop, already?" she exclaimed, when their carriage, after lumbering through street after street, pulled up in front of a hotel.

He drew out his watch. "I can give you two hours before the *Merrimac* claims me, but you had better have something to eat first."

"Can't I have it here in this carriage?"

"No, you cannot," he said, decidedly. "I am not



going to drive through the streets with a lunching young lady."

"Then let us make haste," she said, meekly descending to the pavement.

An hour later, while they were driving to and fro, and he was pointing out objects of special historic interest in the prim old Puritan city, he interposed a question, "How does it all impress you?"

She shook her fluffy head. "Oh, delicious confusion, and noise, plenty of noise! Everything is mixed up to me. I can't seem to separate things. You show me one house, and I look at it, but it melts at once into others. Everything is so close. How can city people think with all these things to look at? Just see that funny cart! Why, there are real reindeer, like those I once saw in a circus."

In the utmost satisfaction he contemplated her gleeful, laughing face. "Now," he said, regretfully, "I must take you back to the hotel. You will not be lonely without me?"

"I shall not be lonely without you," she said, with determination; but when they stood a little later in the middle of a huge mirror-lined reception-room, she looked askance at the big plush chairs holding out inviting arms to her, and faltered, "You will not be very long?"



He smiled in immense gratification, and to his further surprise received a voluntary caress and a pat on the shoulder, while she lisped, "'Steban, don't let any of those things run over you."

He stood waiting for an instant, a slight stealthy colour creeping to his face. But there were no further endearments for him. She was staring out the window with her round, childish eyes; and muttering, "Half a loaf is better than no bread," he swung himself down-stairs and on to a street-car.

He did not see her again until the next morning. She was tired and had gone to bed was the message he received when he returned to the hotel.

Something in her appearance amused him as she came gliding down the long corridor, and he smiled a smile so broad that it threatened to degenerate into a grin. However, he controlled himself when she approached him, and said, politely, "Good morning, did you sleep well? You didn't sleep at all!" he exclaimed, bringing her to a standstill, and putting an anxious finger on the dark semicircles under her eyes. "You were frightened to death in that great room."

"I was not frightened. I didn't sleep because I wanted to think," she replied; "also I was very angry with a young boy."



"What young boy?" he asked, cajolingly, as he drew her into a near writing-room to avoid a bevy of ladies on their way to the dining-room.

"A boy that came when I rang the bell."

"A bell-boy. What did he do?"

"He called me 'ma'am,' and when I asked him what he meant he said, 'Beg pardon, Mrs. Fordyce!' How could you, — how dare you?"

Captain Fordyce suppressed his amusement. "Well, are you not Mrs. Fordyce?"

"No; you must not write me down your wife. I want to be Miss Danvers."

"Have you no regard for my reputation, pussycat?"

"You said young ladies could travel with captains."

"Yes, they can," he said, soothingly, "but I prefer you to take the name that belongs to you. You are always crying honesty. What about sailing under false colours?"

"I think we had better have some breakfast," she said, haughtily.

"Yes, Nina, but first go take off that red tog-gery."

"My morning jacket," she said, with annoyance, "my new morning jacket with the pinked edges.



Mamma said it would be just the thing for breakfast."

"For Rubicon Meadows, not for a city hotel."

"I refuse to take it off. Mamma spent hours in making it."

"Then I refuse to take breakfast with you, little green, country apple."

"Whose fault is it that I am green?" she said, irritably. "Who has kept me mewed up in the country?"

"The best place for you, duckie. Go take off that jacket."

"Oh, I am so disappointed in you. I am so sorry I left home. I thought men were nice and amiable when they were married. I thought they would let their wives do anything; and you said you loved me!"

"So I do, sweetheart," he said, soothingly; "but I don't want to have people goggling at you. You are sensitive and nervous from yesterday, and your lack of sleep last night. You could not stand observation. Come back and show me what you have in the way of clothes. Your esteemed mother may know more about books than I do, but I bet you she doesn't know so much about the fashions."

With a proud and dignified air the girl led the way



to her room. "There," she said, throwing back her trunk lid, "you may see all I have. They're mostly things you sent me, anyway."

He rapidly tossed over every article of clothing submitted to him. "All very well for a maiden lady, not quite enough for a married one."

"Will you stop?" she said, warningly. "I am not married."

"Certainly, darling. Here — what's the matter with this? This is what I call a blue silk blouse with a dash of gold for trimming. Natty, slightly nautical, and in good taste. Take off your red flannel jacket, and I will help you on with it."

"You will do nothing of the sort," she said, opening the door. "Go out into the hall."

He stuffed his handkerchief in his mouth so that she would not hear him laughing, and, having attained to sobriety when she issued from the room a few minutes later, went soberly down the hall by the side of his disturbed young princess.

She thawed when they reached the big dining-room. "Shy, with all her bravado," he muttered, watching her as she crept along in his wake. "Treats me like a dog when we are alone, and like a lord before strangers. It would pay to keep her in a crowd."



She took but little breakfast, and once or twice volunteered remarks to him in a gentle and touchingly confidential tone. Her lips quivered several times, and his face darkened at the sight; for he knew she was thinking of her home and her uncertain parentage.

"Confusion to the brute that forced me to snatch her from that quiet place," he reflected, with inward anger. "I wish I could see him squirm;" and his gaze went to those windows of the dining-room nearest the shores of distant England. Then he addressed Nina under his breath: "Darling, will you do some shopping with me before we go on board the *Merrimac*?"

"If you word that sentence properly, I will," she returned, quietly.

"Miss Danvers, will you be kind enough to bestow the light of your countenance on me while I make a tour of the principal Boston stores?"

"Yes," she replied, tranquilly, "I will."

For several hours they went from store to store. He was hard to suit; and Nina was obliged to allow herself to be pinched, pulled, and fitted by obsequious dressmakers and their attendants, until at last her husband and guardian was satisfied. He put her in a hack; and the bewildered, interested,



and slightly homesick girl found herself being rapidly driven through a noisy, dirty, and mysterious part of the city that at last, however, opened on a stretch of narrow blue water.

She uttered an exclamation of delight, and hung out the carriage window. They had rolled into an enormously long and vaulted shed in which bales of merchandise were piled as high as the roof. Some of these bales were flying wildly through the air, all, however, swinging in the direction of several black, open mouths in the hull of a huge steamer lying against the wharf outside. A number of light yellow boxes were also tumbling to and fro, these propelled by shouting men. The mad haste prevailing among animate and inanimate objects made Nina fall a prey to complete bewilderment, and she frantically clung to the strong arm that was to guide her through this sea of apparent confusion.

When they reached the gangway, a kind of paralysis seized her, and she was conscious of being lifted bodily and set down on a floor as clean as that of the scrubbed kitchens in Rubicon Meadows.

She was on the deck of 'Steban's beloved *Merri-mac*; and, gazing hurriedly about her, she took in the noble lines of a staunch and beautiful ocean-going steamer. But 'Steban had disappeared after



a brief, "Show this lady to ninety-three;" and some one was waiting to conduct her down into the heart of this wonderful and mysterious thing. She meekly followed her guide, who was a smart boy in buttons, and presently she found herself alone and standing in front of a narrow red couch. She dropped on it, passed her hand over her eyes, and sat for a few minutes in blank contentment.

Then she began to reflect. She was quite alone in a tiny room not a quarter as large as her bedroom in Rubicon Meadows. She was very, very young. She had left her darling home and two people who adored her. She was going to sea with a monster whom she hated and could never, never live with. The passengers on the steamer would probably be fine city people who would despise her as a green country girl; but she did not care. She would wear her red jacket to breakfast every morning if she wished. They would probably all be shipwrecked and go down to the fishes. What did anything matter, anyway?

From blank despair she proceeded to a more active display of her emotions, and was soon violently weeping. She would cry now until she died. She was a poor, unfortunate lily, uprooted from her native soil. She was withering cruelly in this atmosphere of



neglect. 'Steban might have spent at least five minutes with her on her arrival in this new and strange place, and she redoubled her "tear falling pity."

However, at eighteen one cannot weep for ever, and after an hour had elapsed she sat up and began to review her situation. After all, it was not so very heartrending. How many girls in Rubicon Meadows would give their worldly all to be in her position, — Captain Fordyce and all her other woes included? And if she were too desperately unhappy on this dreaded voyage, and if she were to escape shipwreck, her home was always open to her, — her beloved home; and flinging herself excitedly from the couch she began to pace up and down the tiny room.

How well planned it was: two white berths, one red couch, a wash-stand and rack for glasses and brushes, and a big open port-hole encased by a shining brass rim. Oh, and a glass! and, hurrying to it, she examined with interest her tear-stained face. White skin, pink cheeks, fluffy auburn hair, hazel eyes, nose passable, and one row of white teeth. Further than that the liliputian mirror refused to go, and, with a smile at its absurdity in not taking in her chin and lower row of teeth, she resolved to have it more conveniently hung, and turned to her window.



There was a great rattling of ropes overhead and creaking of chains, a running to and fro, and a succession of whistles; and, surely now they were moving, actually moving. She would like to go on deck, but she would not venture alone. Well, she could see a section of the long wharf from here. It was gliding slowly from them. Surely it was moving, and the *Merrimac* was stationary. Some of the boxes and bales were left behind; the rearing, plunging horses were being driven away; the workmen were scattering; but here on the end of the wharf was a crowd of men and women, the air about them alive with waving handkerchiefs, hats describing eccentric circles in the air, and shouted parting injunctions; among which the invariable "Write soon" gallantly held its own against numerous odds.

There was no one to see her off, no one who cared for her. She did not even belong to the Danvers. She was probably a lonely orphan, and she again flung herself down on the red couch and buried her face in her hands.



## CHAPTER V.

### FELLOW SHIPS ON THE SEA OF LIFE.

SOME hours passed, but Nina lay quiet and motionless. She had taken her troubles to dreamland ; and, in a motley company, she sauntered through its pleasant shades until a shrill whistle from the deck pierced her sleepy brain and caused her to spring nervously to her feet.

She had been asleep. Well, she felt better for it. How delicious was the salt air ! and she put her face to the port-hole. Now there was nothing but “water, water all around,” and, as the other line of the quotation came into her mind, she reflected that it was her supper-time, and that the strong sea air had made her fearfully and wonderfully hungry and thirsty. Should she reconnoitre ? No, she would certainly lose her way in the labyrinth of passages. ‘Steban would surely come to her rescue.

Simultaneously with the ringing of a bell there was a knock at her door.

She opened it and smiled as a fat stewardess



gasped out the words, "Captain Fordyce wants to know — won't you have — some dinner?"

"Won't you sit down?" said the girl, hospitably. "Yes, I guess I'll have some dinner. Isn't it pretty late for it?"

"I reckon you're from the country," said the stewardess, dropping like a stone on the couch, that gave a low groan at her contact. "We don't have supper till nine. Lunch is in the middle o' the day."

"Indeed," said Nina, quietly.

"I hope you find everythin' comfortable," said the woman, gazing approvingly at the frank, pretty face bent on her. "It's a blessing you ain't goin' to be sick. I see you with the capting. He don't generally bother with passengers. P'raps he knows your fam'ly."

From Nina's earliest recollection Captain Fordyce had been a forbidden subject of conversation; and she had been strictly warned not to mention his name outside her own home, so she responded, vaguely, that he was an old friend of her parents.

"He keeps — mostly to himself," panted the stewardess. "He's an odd man — is the capting. Kind of grouchy and queer. I guess he's led a tough life. Hard work, few friends, little play. Do you fancy him, miss?"



"No," said Nina, rashly.

"No more did I at first," said the woman, sympathetically. "It'll come to you, miss. He's got a soft spot under his hard shell. Many's the good deed he does. The men all like him, though he's a bit hard at first. I heard the second officer—he's new to the ship—tell the doctor that he's a reg'lar martin—martin—"

"Martinet," suggested Nina.

"That's it, miss, but I say it takes all kind o' folks to make a world; and if the capting hasn't got his lips smeared with honey, he knows fine how to work a ship. Come on, my dear young lady. The capting'll think you're not a-coming," and she shuffled down a passage leading to the long, low dining-saloon.

She paused in the doorway, and Nina gave a quick sigh of appreciation. This saloon was infinitely more homelike than the huge hotel dining-room. The windows were all open to the evening air. Cheerful sunbeams streamed through them, lighted up the crimson-covered furniture, the snowy tables, and rejoiced the hearts of a number of yellow-throated canaries, who poured forth a continuous warble from cages half hidden in a bank of green ferns.

At the head of the table nearest the doorway sat a man in a black and gold uniform. The stewardess



pointed to him. "Your seat is there, miss, next the capting."

At the sound of her voice Captain Fordyce turned, and, seeing his young wife, rose and extended a hand. "Ah! here you are. I was afraid you had succumbed to seasickness." Then twirling around a chair next his own, he said: "This is your place."

His manner was conventional, and overcome by it and the uniform, that was quite a new thing to her, Nina subsided into her seat with a pretty blushing stare; then, dropping her eyes, looked at the dainty buttonhole bouquet in the centre of her elaborately folded napkin. The rosebud and sprig of heliotrope seemed like old friends blown her from the garden at home, and, gently putting them to her face, she looked around to see what the other ladies were doing with theirs. They were fastening them in their dresses. She imitated them, then taking up the menu beside her plate she read in bewilderment its comprehensive contents.

The tall steward standing behind her chair breathed a soft little sigh; thus admonished of her duty, she hastily found the soups, and, running her eye over the different kinds, said, "Tomato."

In a trice he reappeared with it. As she picked up her spoon Captain Fordyce said, inquiringly:



“So you are not going to be ill?”

“I have been ill, dreadfully ill,” said the girl, innocently, “but I have got quite over it now.”

“And we are just three hours out of port,” he remarked, in a quiet, amused fashion. “Allow me to congratulate you on the celerity with which you have vanquished the foe to enjoyment of life at sea. I hope my other passengers may be equally fortunate.”

Not feeling inclined for conversation, Nina let this remark pass. Captain Fordyce looked away from her down the crowded tables, then said to a lady on his left hand, “You asked about the weather, Mrs. Grayley. I prophesy that there won’t be a score of people at these tables to-morrow.”

She uttered a disturbed exclamation. “Are we going to have it rough?”

He gave her a curtly polite, “Yes.” It was not his habit to talk much. He preferred to listen. This she seemed to divine, and forthwith poured out an animated stream of babble on the probability of their having bad weather during their voyage to England.

For several courses Nina was left to herself, and occupied the time by studying the passenger list and making a careful examination of the faces about



her. She avoided the head of the table. The features of the man sitting there were as well-known to her as her own, although this evening his uniform did seem to give him a strange unfamiliarity of aspect.

The lady to whom he was talking looked forty or thereabout, though she was chattering in a babyish way that Nina, in spite of her youth, could scarcely emulate. Her face was unattractive, — a combination of faded beauty and silliness; but one only and beautiful charm she possessed, namely, her hands. They were wonderfully white and pretty, and she made them do extra duty by keeping her elbows on the table the greater part of the time.

Nina's eyes wandered from Mrs. Grayley to her neighbour, a tall, plain-featured man whose benevolent blue eyes chastened the warlike aspect of his immense blond moustache and aquiline nose. Under his right eyebrow was a gold-rimmed glass; and while she covered it with a prolonged stare, she gathered from his conversation that he was an officer in an English regiment, and that he had been making a tour of the principal American cities.

Suddenly he met her glance, and, wrinkling his forehead, let his glass fall with a click on the shiny buttons of his coat, with the effect of making her



start slightly. As he was looking at her, her occupation in his direction was gone; so she glanced cautiously at his left-hand neighbour, who had not yet got beyond the entrées, and was obstinately demanding something that the menu did not contain, and yet that he thought he had discovered there.

Nina in awed wonderment gazed at the expanse of red throat presented, as the determined man twisted his head to remonstrate with the steward. This was a real live English knight, Sir Hervey Forrest. She should be quite frightened of him. He had a round, thick head, bristling gray hairs, pompous figure, and overpowering manner. Surely he should have had the chief seat at the table,—he and his wife, the gray, smooth, elegant, distinguished little mouse beside him, who rarely opened her mouth, except to put food in it in the daintiest way possible. Their names headed the passenger list at least, and Nina was just reading them over again, when a growl from the knight caught her attention.

He had come off second best in the dispute with the steward, and was now addressing her husband. “You, sir,—you ought to have your bills of fare printed. Your passengers, sir, get lost in this maze of writing.”



Nina trembled, and gazed apprehensively at Captain Fordyce, who was coolly surveying the inflamed face turned toward him.

"We don't carry a printing-press, sir. The company has expense enough in other ways."

"Haven't you got a typewriter, sir? Haven't you got a typewriter?" spluttered the disturbed man.

"I believe we have," returned Captain Fordyce. "Merdyce," and he addressed his own servant who stood behind his chair, "ask the chief steward to have Sir Hervey Forrest's menu typewritten tomorrow."

The knight was enraged. He had attained to his present high position from a comparatively low origin. There were enough jokes at his expense floating about now to keep him in constant irritation. In addition, the impression would get out that he could only decipher the most legible handwriting. "I don't want a menu typewritten for me alone, sir," he stammered; "have them done for all the passengers."

Captain Fordyce, usually impatient and scornful with bickering, faultfinding passengers, was now intensely entertained, owing to the fact that Miss Brighteyes was hanging on his every word and look,



and was breathlessly watching every turn of the dispute.

“Only as they request them, Sir Hervey,” he said, good-naturedly. “Do I understand you to say you revoke your request?”

Lady Forrest murmured something in a low voice to her choleric spouse, and he flung himself over his plate. “Let it go, sir, let it go. Your menu is a slovenly thing, but I prefer it as it is.”

“Merdyce,” said Captain Fordyce, turning to his servant with an imperturbable air, “do not tell the chief steward to typewrite a menu for Sir Hervey Forrest to-morrow.”

Nina exchanged a smile with her husband, then stole a quiet glance across the vacant chair on her right hand. Beyond the chair sat a young man; and she was quite well aware of the fact that, while she had been taken up with a survey of the other people at the table, he had been throwing her a number of scrutinising glances across the red plush seat. Now she looked stealthily at him. Heretofore her acquaintance with men had been extremely limited. In *les affaires du cœur* she would prove a formidable rival to Molière’s Agnes, but that had not prevented her from forming several theories with regard to the stronger sex. They had no right to be as handsome



as women, that she firmly believed; yet, notwithstanding her preconceived opinion, a feeling of admiration stole over her as she surveyed the manly beauty of the tall, graceful form next her; and she half-impatiently acknowledged to herself that he eclipsed by far the most beautiful woman that she had ever seen.

His eyelids' "black and silken fringe" was drooping on the "vermil tinge" of his cheek, as he gazed thoughtfully at his plate. Something pleasing must be passing through his mind, for soon he smiled faintly, and she caught a glimpse of glittering white teeth through the heavy black of his moustache. He had the full, distinct, and well-proportioned lips that, according to Lavater, designate a character hostile to falsehood, villainy, and baseness, but with a propensity to pleasure!

The infatuating nature of the science of physiognomy had led the girl to study intently a Lavater that she one day found among some old books belonging to Mrs. Danvers. Accordingly, she pieced out for her neighbour a character that she hoped she might have the satisfaction of finding to be correct. He was not wanting in the perpendicular incisions between the eyebrows that evidenced strength of mind, nor in the energy-portending black eyes. His



horizontal eyebrows denoted a masculine and vigorous character, and the broad, square forehead, a strong memory.

She was just trying to decide whether his chin meant coolness of temper or extreme good nature, when she heard, in a dry tone, "A penny for your thoughts."

She looked up and found that Captain Fordyce's deep, dark-pupilled eyes were turned on her with an expression almost of displeasure.

"I have asked you twice for the walnuts," he went on, "yet you dream away as if you were alone in a desert."

"So I am alone in a dessert," she said, mischievously, as she put the dish within his reach.

He shook his head at her, then applied himself to his nuts. Nina tried to be less absent-minded, but she took no part in the animated conversation kept up by the most of the passengers. She did not scrutinise any more of them. Their number bewildered her. She would attack the remainder to-morrow; and there was another wave of homesickness passing over her. She dropped the bunch of raisins she had just taken, threw down her napkin, and left the table.

While she was hurriedly trying to find her way to



her room, she heard a step behind her, and a remark in her husband's deep voice: "I am on my way to see the other young lady that I have in charge. She is ill already, but I think I can persuade her to spend the evening in the chart-room. I have some writing to do. Perhaps you will come and help me entertain her. It will be pleasanter for you than sitting alone or among all these strangers."

"I—I don't think I would do her any good," stammered Nina, plaintively.

"What about misery and company?"

She reluctantly made a gesture of consent, and Captain Fordyce continued, "Let us go to ninety-three and get a wrap, so you may have a walk before going to bed."

"I thought you didn't like red," observed Nina, coldly, when he stepped out of her room holding a brilliant-hued cloak.

"For a wrap, yes," he remarked, folding it over his arm. "It is just the thing for youth and beauty, and gives a glow to your travelling frock. It also reminds me of Rubicon Meadows,—you remember you used to wear it there?"

Yes, she remembered it; but she made no reply, and silently followed him up a companionway, and past the deck-cabins to a little room just under the



bridge. It was a tiny place, but exceedingly cosy. Crimson curtains hung before the door and the two small windows; the walls were lined with mirrors, pictures, and different kinds of nautical instruments that to Nina's inexperienced eyes looked like mouse-traps. A large lamp covered by a rose shade shed a soft, subdued light over everything.

"How delightfully comfortable!" she exclaimed, her displeasure suddenly leaving her.

Captain Fordyce pulled forward an armchair, and with a pleased smile ran down the steps to the deck. Presently he came back. "Miss Marsden is horribly sick, and hopes we may all go to the bottom before morning."

"Poor girl!" said Nina, compassionately. "Can I do anything for her?"

"No; she has her maid and the stewardess."

"A maid — all to herself?"

"Yes, she has plenty of money."

"Where does she come from?"

"Boston."

"What is she going to England for?"

"Love-sickness, — to cure it. Her mother told me that she had been jilted. She is going to visit relatives in London."



"What a mean man!" exclaimed Nina. Then she added, sentimentally, "She will forget him.

" 'For love fares hardly on ingratitude ;  
And love dies quickly nurtured by deceit ;  
And love turns hatred captured by a cheat.' "

Captain Fordyce listened in an attention so fascinated and so flattering that Nina thought well to turn his thoughts in another direction, and therefore asked, shrewdly, "Was that nobleman mad because he couldn't sit by you at dinner?"

"I guess he was, Miss New England," said her husband, with a sigh, "but he is not a nobleman."

"He has a title."

"He was knighted on the occasion of some royal celebration. He was a mayor of a Cheshire city at the time, — made his money in coal."

"Isn't he a bloated aristocrat?"

"No."

"Then if he is only bloated without the aristocrat I sha'n't be afraid of him. Why didn't you let him sit beside you?"

"Because he didn't apply in time. Those that get their names in first get the best seats. I am not going to have exceptions made for Sir Hervey Forrest or any other person."



"I didn't apply for my seat."

"I was looking out for you."

"It is good for every woman to have some man to attend to business matters for her," said the girl, sententiously.

"Is that the only path of usefulness you would lay out for mankind?"

"Oh, no," she replied, carelessly, "they can carry parcels, and get you through a crowd, and not talk foolishness when you want silence. Where did that bloater get his nice little gray herring?"

"If you mean Lady Forrest, she was a milliner's pretty apprentice, I believe, in her early days. She seems a ladylike woman, though, more ballast than he has."

"That is a very beautiful young man next me," said Nina, earnestly. "Do you know who he is?"

"No; don't want to. A regular tailor's figure."

"What is his name?"

"Delessert; now please stop your charming gabble and let me work," and, whirling around his chair toward the table, he occupied himself in scribbling queer figures like hieroglyphics, the meaning of which Nina was unable to determine. She leaned back on her cushions and indulged in sweet idleness. Presently Captain Fordyce's gold-rimmed cap caught



her dreamy, wandering eye. To glance from it to its owner was a natural thing. She lazily surveyed his face through her half-shut eyelids. What an air of command he carried. If she were a sailor she would be afraid to disobey the slightest order coming from that determined mouth ; but, not being a sailor, — she laughed so distinctly that she feared he heard her. But he did not. His mind was fully taken up with his writing, and, seeing this, she closed her eyes and gave herself up to a retrospect of the exciting and fatiguing events of the last two days.



## CHAPTER VI.

### LET US MAKE A NEW BEGINNING.

SUDDENLY a seeming trumpet voice broke in upon her slumbers. She started, and half rose from her chair.

“Eh! what?” she cried, crossly, “no, I am not asleep; why do you roar at me in that fashion?”

“I spoke in an ordinary tone of voice,” said Captain Fordyce, quietly.

“Did you?” she said, confusedly, “I must have been dreaming.”

“Yes, you were asleep. You sat thinking for a long time, then your eyes closed, and you dropped off.”

She glanced sharply at him. He was about to enter upon his favourite topic of conversation, namely, herself, and, anxious to get him off such dangerous ground, she pointed beyond him, and said, hurriedly, “I love the sea when it looks like that.”

The curtains were looped back, and the doorway framed for them a charming picture, — a stretch of



the deepest, darkest, bluest sea imaginable, and over it a moon new and radiant, set in a sky studded with brightly twinkling stars. As Captain Fordyce turned and looked over his shoulder, a small cloud dragged its white fleece across the silver crescent.

"See what it is to have an evil eye," he said, half aloud; "at one glance from me the scene changes."

Nina knew little of the dark side of his nature, and, touched by the suppressed bitterness of his tone, she felt it incumbent on her to say something to comfort him.

"You have not an evil eye, 'Steban. You have a good eye, and people like you, — your sailors, too."

He suddenly turned his gaze from the starry sky to her. "Who told you that?"

"Oh, some one," she replied, evasively.

"That old gossip of a stewardess?"

Nina would not tell him, and he bent his head to conceal the quick, gratified flush that overspread his face.

"What time is it?" asked the girl, rising. "I must go to bed."

"Not late," he answered, idly, snapping the shabby silver case of his watch.

"Tell me exactly."

"Half-past eight."



“Oh, it must be later ; I believe it is later,” and she came and looked over his shoulder. “Story-teller ! it is half-past nine. Please hand me my cloak.”

He watched with the utmost interest her transformation from a damsel clad in a sober travelling suit to the gayest, most vivid of Red Riding Hoods. Then he said, with sober admiration : “ You would not have that lily and rose complexion, Nina, if it were not for your early hours.”

Annoyed by the broadness of his compliment and the mention of her Christian name, that she suddenly considered a breach of compact, she flashed him an indignant, remonstrating glance, while tying the ribbons of her cape.

“ May I assist you ? ” he asked, coming toward her.

Her mouth opened to refuse his offer, but he closed it by stooping down and lightly imprinting a kiss on her lips. Her first sentiment was one of unmitigated wonder. Then stepping back against the wall, she stared at him in anger complete and undisguised.

“ I could not help it, Red Riding Hood,” he said, with a deprecatory gesture. “ It is that Rubicon Meadows cloak. I am sure you won’t blame me



when you look in the glass and see how fascinating you are."

His light tone aggravated the extent of his transgression; and with cheeks on fire and in a suffocated voice she stammered: "How dare you do so? You ought to be ashamed of yourself."

He had not heard her. His two hands were gently laid on her shoulders, and in a voice of ineffable tenderness he was repeating under his breath, "My little wife, my little wife."

Nina was frightened, confused, and tried to push his hands away, but he quietly restrained her. "Darling, — since those solemn words were spoken over us yesterday, — is there a difference?"

"Yes — no," she stammered, wildly. Then as he still caressed her, and regarded her with the new, strange expression that fascinated and yet repelled her, she exclaimed, wildly: "'Steban, don't, oh, don't, don't. *Don't* be serious. Please let me go. I do not love you, really. Not enough to live with you all the time. Don't say such things to me. I am in earnest. I am."

He stared sadly at the hand she had caught and was holding in both her own, then he drew it from her and turned to the doorway.

"I don't blame you," she whispered against his



shoulder; "but you must not speak in that way to me. You make me frantic. I suppose it was the cloak."

"Yes, it was the cloak," he said, quietly. "I beg your pardon, Nina. It was certainly the cloak."

"I will take it off," she said, hurriedly, and she threw it across her arm.

"Little goose," and he wrapped it over her shoulders, tied it under her chin, then in his old brotherly manner drew the hood over her head and tucked in the curls that had always held out a fluttering temptation to him when his little sweetheart donned the cloak to stroll with him to the gate of the Rubicon Meadows house.

"Now," he said, drawing aside the curtains, "let me escort you to your room."

Nina did not know why a mist of tears suddenly floated before her eyes. Stumbling blindly out, she made a false step, and would have fallen, save for the protecting arm thrown around her. By the time they reached the deck she was speechless, and, drawing her arm through his own, Captain Fordyce walked toward the companion. There he paused in order that she might step over the high, brass-covered threshold of the door.

The careless debonair face of her handsome neigh-



bour at dinner appeared. Seeing her, he took his cigar from his mouth, and lifted his cap as he passed. Captain Fordyce wrinkled his forehead slightly, and said in her ear, "Come for a walk. It will make you sleep better."

Nina made a faint, convulsive effort to withdraw her arm from his. Without avail, however, for he did not perceive it, and drew her out on the deck again with a muttered, "It has got as dark as a pocket. I don't like the way those clouds are gathering."

There was no response to his remark, and for several minutes they paced in silence up and down the quarter-deck. "You are not talking," he said, at last; "are you tired or in the doldrums?"

Their promenade had ceased, and they were standing by the stern rail looking down at the phosphorescent waves below. His seriousness was all gone, and in a jocular tone he ejaculated, "Doldrums it is!"

Nina was staring down at the churning, foaming mass around the angry screw. She, too, was trying to lash herself into a rage, but her effort was not as successful as that of the bit of machinery below; and it was in a weak and unstable voice that she murmured, "You have broken your promise."

"What promise, darling?" It was very dark in



the corner where they were standing, and he drew her closer and whispered the words in her ear.

"That — that you would be a stranger to me," she whispered back.

He laughed immoderately. "You queer child!"

"You did," she said, faintly; "yesterday on the bridge you said if I would come you would be careful. Nobody would suspect our relation to each other."

"Nobody will know from me. I am propriety, reticence itself, when there is any one about. Only when we are alone will I give you a chance to snub me."

"But you promised for all the time."

"Pardon me, darling, I did not. In all the long list of things you made me swear not to do in the presence of strangers, there was not a word said about my behaviour when we were alone."

Nina was staggered. "Didn't I?" she gasped. "That is why you are so bad. What a simpleton I am! Let me go to bed."

"All right, you dear, little, bad-tempered thing. My only wish is to please you," and he released her arm and drew his cigar-case from his pocket.

A near lamp threw a lurid glare over his swarthy features, but her figure was completely in the



shadow. To his surprise, she did not disappear with an abusive sentence. She still lingered, and, drawing nearer him, she stood for a minute in deepest thought. Then she took him gingerly by the coat sleeve, and whispered, in faintly audible tones, "Steban!"

"Yes, darling," he muttered, holding his breath as he bent down to the animated face now glowing with some sudden and exquisite emotion.

"I want to tell you what is in my mind."

"Just what I would like to hear," he uttered, in the same cautious way.

"You know I haven't been brought up like other girls."

"Just like thousands of other sweet country girls, darling."

"You know what I mean," she murmured, not pettishly, but with angelic forbearance. "I mean about you. Most girls aren't tied to a man as I have been."

"You could have broken your bonds at any time."

"So you have told me," she said, with the faintest flash of indignation; "but how could I? Had I no gratitude? — and I don't like the boys at home. They are not as clever as you."

He suppressed a delighted chuckle.



"And I expect some day that I shall get to be very fond of you — very fond, 'Steban."

"Heaven hasten the day," he muttered.

"But, 'Steban, if I take my own way about it the day will come quicker."

"Then take it by all means, darling."

"Now, I'll tell you just what I think," she went on, resting one hand on his breast, and staring more earnestly into his face: "I'm a free-born American, and you are one half English and the other half Spanish."

"Bless her," he reflected with inward perturbation, "if she only knew!"

"And I have independent ways, and your European style of treating women doesn't suit me."

"What style is it, darling, if I may ask?"

"A kind of lordly style. You seem to think, 'This woman is mine. I can do what I like with her.'"

"A vile style, sweetheart, — a much-to-be-condemned style, quite unknown in America."

"Now, as I say, if you will do as I tell you, you may make me think a great deal of you in a very short time. I want to put you back in your proper position. You see I have known you too long, and you have known me too well. You must try to be



meek and humble like a gentleman just getting acquainted with me; and you must always try to please me and not order me about. Don't say, 'Come for a walk.' Say, 'Won't you be kind enough to take a little stroll with me?'"

"Very well, darling. Won't you be kind enough to take a little stroll with me?"

"Not this evening, Captain Fordyce," she responded, graciously. "Perhaps to-morrow morning. Now another thing. Don't take too much notice of me. Let me hear your praises from other people. Sometimes you brag a little about the way you run a ship."

"I never do," he said, hastily.

"Yes, 'Steban," she said, very gently, but with decision. "Once or twice when the company gave you a bonus."

He was silent, and she went on. "We will be extremely formal with each other, and, if you can bring yourself to it, I wish you would call me Miss Danvers when we are alone. I will call you Captain Fordyce, and pretend that I only got acquainted with you yesterday. I hope no one on the steamer knows that we are married. What are you shivering for?"

"A fly bit me," he said, mendaciously.



"Then," she continued, "insensibly and by degrees I shall become attached to you. By the time we reach England, I shall be a little bit in love with you. I hope you will send me away off to some place like London, where I can write long letters to you. You will reply to them; then, after a time, I shall be frantically in love with you just like Juliet with Romeo, and I shall not be able to live without you."

"Glory to Shakespeare, darling!" he said, rapturously, and he embraced her.

"But we must begin at once," she said, gravely, unwinding his arm from her waist. "We have lost too much time already. I wish you good night, Captain Fordyce."

"I wish you good night, Miss Danvers," and he took her in his arms.

She struggled away from him. "You deceitful creature!"

"But we were not to begin fooling till to-morrow. I distinctly understood that."

"I am beginning to-night," she said, gravely; and, sweeping him a curtsey, she endeavoured to walk in a stilted fashion down the deck, but was obliged to break into an undignified run because he was pursuing her.



Upon arriving in her room, she found the "fair, fat, and forty" stewardess there with an armful of clean towels.

"You've come to bed, miss — that is, mem. I beg pardon, I'm sure. I didn't know this afternoon as how you was the captin's bride. I was took all aback. I don't know when anything has upset me so."

In disturbed surprise Nina fastened an earnest look on a spot on the door just over the woman's head.

"Nobody thought as how he'd marry; but he's just the one to up and do it and say nothin'. It not bein' nobody's business, and nobody could tell by his actions. He's not one to care much about women. But as I said — I beg pardon, and it'll not occur again."

Nina was still unresponsive, and the woman, anxious to please her, rambled on. "I guess the whole ship's as glad as I am. The boys would like to do somethin'."

"I forbid it," said Nina, hurriedly.

"All right, mem. We all see you're somethin' young and shy. I'm sure I wish you fortune, mem. You've drawed a prize in the lottery."

"Does — does everybody know?" stammered Nina.



"Yes, mem," said the woman, cheerfully. "That is, all the ship's company. The passengers wouldn't occupy themselves so much with it, but they'll soon find out. You'll get lots of attention, mem, bein' the capting's bride."

"I don't want it," she said, quickly. "I — I think I am going to be seasick."

"I hope not, mem. Shall I help you undress?"

"No, thank you."

"And you don't like the capting's rooms on deck," said the woman, rolling her eyes around the tiny apartment. She was bursting with curiosity, but Nina did not see it. "Was you afraid?" she went on when no reply was vouchsafed her.

"Yes," said Nina, miserably.

"It's safer here in storms. Let me unfasten that collar."

"I don't want you to touch me. I don't feel well. I've got a dreadful pain."

"A pain, mem, — where is it?"

"In my side. Please go away."

The stewardess's good-humour, preserved through a long course of waiting on querulous and seasick women, was not to be upset. "Shall I call the capting, mem?"

"No," said Nina, decidedly, and she opened the



door for her. "I've had too much excitement to-day. I must be alone."

"Married him for his money," soliloquised the woman as she sidled along the passage. "Country girl — parents made her. Don't like him — Oh, sir ! beg pardon !"

She had almost collided with Mr. Delessert. He favoured her with a glimpse of his beautiful white teeth, then he said, as she was about to pass him, "Stewardess, can you tell me the name of that pretty girl who sat next the captain at dinner ?"

"She's his wife, sir."

"His wife !" he echoed, in faint skepticism.

"Yes, sir."

"Did he tell you so ?"

"No, sir ; he don't have no conversation with us. Her name ain't on the list. Jim — he's the head cook's boy — he was up to the office just afore we started, mailin' a package for me. One of the clerks says to him, 'So Captin' Sunshine's got married.' That's the name they give him 'cause he's so glum. Jim, he gasped, but the clerk showed him the sailin' list. Last name was Mrs. Fordyce, room ninety-three. You see, sir, the company's particular. The captings ain't allowed to carry wives only once in so often."



Mr. Delessert was listening politely, but with no great show of interest. However, when she finished, he drawled, in a languid way, "Do you know what Mrs. Fordyce's name was before she was married?"

"No, sir, but I could find out."

"Do so, I beg," and he slipped something into her hand, and passed on.

The woman, flattered at being addressed by so handsome a young man, approvingly pressed the piece of money in her hand. "He's as pretty as a picture. I guess the capting's bride must remind him of some one he knows."



## CHAPTER VII.

### WE ARE PROGRESSING.

EARLY the next morning Nina, refreshed and blooming from her night's sleep, made her way to the deck. She frowned, however, at the bridge, the centre of her husband's authority, and, in order to get as far as possible from it, drew a camp-stool to a secluded corner by the wheel-house.

The sea was very rough, and the *Merrimac* was rolling and pitching in the huge swell, until the girl, in her inexperience, feared that the steamer would forget herself during one of her side-to-side plunges, and turn quite over.

She fixed her eyes on a white sail in the distant horizon. Just as a high, over-topping wave hid it from her view, she heard a heavy footstep behind her.

Involuntarily she clasped the rail more tightly with her bare hands. Yes, it was his grave voice, asking some question of an officer who stood beside the man at the wheel.



She stared steadfastly at the stormy petrels circling in graceful evolutions against the gray, dull sky, till some one came behind her, and she heard a formal and decorous, "Good morning, Miss Danvers. Will you be kind enough to take a stroll with me?"

With a silent shrug of her shoulders, she kept her attention riveted on the petrels.

"Did I not begin right? Well, then — The top of the morning to you, darling."

He was close beside her now, and his dark face was so near her own that she instinctively shrank away.

His eyebrows contracted, and, putting his brown hand over her clenched white ones, he said, "You may take cold sitting there. Come for a walk."

Sorely against her will she rose, and, by way of showing her displeasure, refused his proffered arm. He threw a meaning glance at the decks that seemed to be abandoning the horizontal and striving for the perpendicular, and the next instant Nina found herself dashed in a forlorn heap at the foot of a large deck compass.

Captain Fordyce sprang to her aid, and, as he picked her up, put her cap on her curls again, with the words, "Poor child, have you hurt yourself?"

Nina gave him a faint, "No." Drawing her now



unresisting arm through his own, he walked down the long decks, clean and wet from a recent scrubbing, past the bridge and the portion of the ship allotted to the second cabin passengers. When they came to the steerage quarters, Nina turned away her head to avoid a puff of hot air that swept up the narrow opening. A pale-faced woman with a baby in her arms struggled on deck. She unwittingly crossed the dividing line between her portion of the ship and that belonging to the richer, more favoured class.

Captain Fordyce's eyes rested on her, and he nodded slightly to one of the ship's officers who happened to be passing. It did not escape Nina. She saw the woman sent back, and pitied the weary look on her face, as she quietly retraced her steps.

"Please let me speak to her for a moment," she said to her companion.

He released her, and hurrying back she put her hand in her pocket. There was no money there. She had left her purse in her room. She drew a little gay silk handkerchief from the breast of her coat, and, pressing it between the woman's thin fingers, told her to twist it around the baby's neck.

The woman's white lips murmured a blessing, and, with tears in her eyes, Nina turned toward the prow



of the ship. Had she incurred the Grand Turk's displeasure? and she anxiously scanned his face as he guided her steps over a huge anchor lying on the deck.

It softened perceptibly. "Order must be maintained on a ship, Nina, or everything would run to confusion. We could not have all the different classes of passengers scrambling about together."

"Of course not, but you might have spoken to that poor woman yourself."

"That would not be ship etiquette, and, moreover, you must remember that a man who has knocked about the world as much as I have cannot be expected to have the sensibilities of a boarding-school miss."

"That is no excuse," she said, rebukingly. "One person is as good as another. You ought to be as kind to that woman as you are to me. Whether you feel like it or not —" Then a thought of her own shortcomings brought her to a sudden stop.

"You little prig, I am not as hard-hearted as you think. I am sorry for that woman, but what can I do? Money it would not be wise to give her, sympathy I cannot express as you did just now. Don't you see," eagerly, "that is just what I want you for, or, rather, one of the things I want you for. A kind-



hearted, charitable little wife, what a help she would be to me ! ”

Nina made no reply, and, holding out a hand, he assisted her in clambering to the bow of the ship, immediately over the figured maiden who stood night and day with hands clasped on her breast, and the cold waves lapping her bare, white feet.

A sense of exultation came over the girl as they went down to the depths and then seemed to rise to the sky. The wind cut her face like a scourge, and the salt spray dashed high over her head ; but with her eye embracing the boundless expanse, she felt that she could stand for ever gazing at the angry waste of waters. She had even begun to con over all the sea-poetry that she could remember, when her mind was recalled to her present surroundings by hearing the man at her side say, “ Why did you not put on that pretty red cloak this morning ? ”

She turned rebukingly around. He was looking at her with his usual air of calm proprietorship. She could do nothing with him. He would not be formal. He would not be indifferent. And there was no one in sight. The decks were as desolate as the sea.

“ There are disagreeable, exceedingly disagreeable memories connected with that cloak now,” she said, haughtily.



“Specify the memories, birdie.”

She would not gratify him, and he went on, softly, “Memories of home and affection : and there are so many lonely people in the world.”

She would not answer him. Her eyes were persistently fixed on the distracted waves, torn and buffeted, and hurled from the embrace of the strange white maiden crossing their path.

He changed his tone. “You are in a temper, birdie, your eyes are glittering, and there are angry dashes of red in your cheeks, and you are trembling like a little, frightened dove, or a very successful young actress. Which is it, — dove or actress ?”

She burst out upon him with a question. “What are you running about the ship for, telling everybody that I am your wife ?”

He suppressed his astonishment, and for some time contemplated her in silence. Then he asked in a low voice, for some emigrant children had suddenly appeared near them, clambering over the anchor and tumbling over each other, “Nina, what do you suppose was the last thought in my mind when I turned into my berth at one this morning ?”

“I don’t know — I don’t care to know,” she said, warningly.

“I thought, ‘My little girl is down below.’ When



you look out at this," and he waved his hand toward the vast surging expanse beyond, "and realise the awful loneliness of it, you can in part imagine what that thought was to me."

Nina shuddered, and uttered a feeble, "Don't!"

"Other men have homes, wives, children," he went on, in the same peculiar voice; "ordinarily, I have nothing."

"You have me," she said, wildly, "'Steban, don't talk so."

He put up a hand to check her increasing tones. "You," he murmured, "what are you? A sight, a glimpse, a breath, — an unsubstantial nothing. Are you not planning to leave me in a few days?"

"I will come back. I will surely come back."

"You will never come back. There are other men in the world. You will fall in love with one of them and forget me."

"I shall not forget you," she said, passionately.

The children heard her and stared, but this time her husband did not repress her. He could not afford to lose one glimpse into the girlish soul unfolding so surely.

"Nina," he said, quietly, "perhaps I ought to release you. It is only a question of a few years," and he nodded toward the ocean; "it is always wait-



ing. I shall be swallowed up some time. Then you can be happy with some other man."

He had not frightened her. He had gone too far, and her suddenly pale face resumed its natural colour. "It is not like you to give things up," she said, simply, "and I believe you will outlive me, but —"

"But what?" he asked, eagerly.

"But I wish you would not talk in that way," she said, composedly.

"In what way?"

"About dying — and other men."

"Why not?"

"It is too much of a pleasure to me," she said, roguishly. "It suggests things that will never happen."

He smiled happily. He, in his turn, could not be deceived. She had grown white; she had been frightened; she had swept with one terrified glance the hungry ocean, and with another loving, faithful one his expectant face. He had seen in her eyes the expression he wished to cultivate, and he laughed aloud in his content.

"Oh, you are so provoking," she said, biting her lip. "You will not stay where I put you. You are so aggressive. You promised everything last



evening ; this morning you are detestable. We are just where we were before."

"Softly, darling, those children are gaping, and we are not standing still. We are progressing."

"Progressing — progressing ; we are going back !" she said, impatiently.

"Give me your hand," he said, abruptly, "we will have a run to restore your good-humour."

Swiftly he rushed her down the long decks, till, panting and breathless, they leaned against a door, and she echoed his recent laughter. She could not help it. His drooping head and hand on his heart were so irresistibly comical, and in such amusing contrast to his usually dignified deportment.

"That's good," he remarked, approvingly ; "it is worth a kingdom to see your face light up in that way. Now will it please your ladyship to continue merry and to have some breakfast ?"

Nina followed him to the dining-saloon. On entering it he said : "No ladies this morning ; just what I predicted. Mrs. Grayley is not, Lady Forrest is not, only a handful of men at the table. So if you open your obstinate little mouth you will have to talk to me, Red Riding Hood."

Nina silently took her place with Captain Eversleigh opposite her, and Mr. Delessert next her.



She would feel very lonely without any members of her own sex, and as for the staring eyes of that red lobster, Sir Hervey Forrest, she would not meet them. So she shyly kept her head bent over her plate until forced to lift it by the prolonged catastrophe of breakfast.

The heavy pitching of the *Merrimac* caused the dishes to slide gracefully from one end of the table to the other. However, by way of change, the ship occasionally abandoned the rising and falling motion, and, taking a sudden and unexpected roll, caused a number of the articles on the table to jump frantically over the guards and precipitate themselves into the passengers' laps.

When Captain Eversleigh received fair in the chest a loaf of bread that sent his eye-glass dashing through the air and thoroughly upset his usual British equanimity, Nina gave vent to her feelings of amusement by indulging in a burst of uncontrollable girlish laughter.

The subject of her amusement glanced benevolently at her, and the other semi-seasick, preoccupied, and grumbling men at the table listened appreciatively to the sound of the fresh, clear young voice, some of them even joining in with her.

Captain Fordyce looked on, well pleased to have



her admired, but suddenly exclaimed : "Take *care*, Nina Stephana !"

Two cruet-stands came clattering down from the rack overhead, and, spinning about "quick and more quick in giddy gyres," shed at last ruin and desolation over Mr. Delessert and herself.

In spite of receiving half the contents of a bottle of sauce on his black head, Mr. Delessert looked inquiringly at her through the dark brown streams of the condiment pouring down each side of his Grecian nose.

"A saucy stare," muttered Captain Fordyce, while Nina, on whom his utterance of her Christian name had made no impression, answered her neighbour's incredulous and, to her, incomprehensible glance by a suppressed laugh, as she slipped from her seat to follow his example of retiring to perform necessary ablutions.

"You are only a trifle devastated," said Captain Fordyce, rising too, and taking one napkin after another that his servant hastily handed him to whisk off her shoulders. "You need not go away. Your gown is not injured."

Nina dropped into her seat again, and continued her occupation of rolling her brown eyes around the room. The skylights were closed, the canaries were



mute, and as breakfast progressed the agitation of the *Merrimac* increased. The wind whistled outside, every timber in the ship creaked in response. Collisions between the stewards were of frequent occurrence, with the result of black forms in brass buttons stretched forlornly on the floor, reaching out helpless arms toward their late burdens, that slipped aggravatingly under the tables and chairs and into the most obscure holes and corners of the room.

Two of the swinging lamps fell with a crash, and from a distant pantry came at intervals such loud reports of smashing dishes that Captain Fordyce began to frown in a heavy, displeased way.

The absurdity of his annoyance seemed so evident to Nina that she went off into another fit of laughter, in which he partially joined, while the quaking stewards threw her glances of gratitude.

After breakfast Captain Fordyce remarked, regretfully, "I am going to be busy, but I can provide occupation for you. Will you go and console Miss Marsden?"

Nina hung back. "I don't want to. She is probably some fashionable girl."

"I'll wager there isn't a society item in her head now. Come and see her," and, seizing her gently



resisting hand, he assisted her down the passage to a room not far from her own.

Nina with concealed awe stood before the tall, handsome Boston girl. Then, seeing that she was suffering, she lost all dread of her, and proceeded to administer consolation in a characteristic way that made Captain Fordyce swing himself off to his own concerns in deep inward satisfaction.

How dear she was to him! She would never know, never until she was older and had more sense. It was a misfortune that she was so young: and yet was it a misfortune? He did not regret it in some ways, and her girlish form danced before him over the deck, up the ladder, and across the bridge. Always there, never absent from him. Her name was written on the sky, the sea-birds shrieked "Nina!" He had scarcely a thought that was not in some way mixed up with her, his heart's darling, the life of his life; his face shone with so telltale and radiant a light that the first officer turned on his heel and walked away lest he should be suspected of spying on his superior in command. However, as he walked he muttered with amused revenge, "There's no fool like an old fool except a middle-aged fool."

At noon the sea was still rough, the public rooms were deserted, and the staterooms full. But when



the lunch bell rang, Nina demurely appeared, bringing with her a fresh, unruffled appearance, and, probably, her usual excellent appetite.

But there was something the matter with her, for when her husband rose from his seat with a relieved air and said, "I was afraid you were going to fail us," she sat down without noticing him.

"May I give you some beef?" he went on, politely.

"No, thanks," she said, briefly, "I wish some tongue," and she glanced toward her right-hand neighbour, who immediately began to cut her thin slices.

Captain Fordyce frowned, and Nina, being quite well aware of it, wrinkled her own forehead in displeasure. He was the most jealous, tyrannical man ever created, and even the small matter of refusing to be served by him was sufficient to throw him in a temper. Yet there were sins worse than jealousy. Pray Heaven he was not guilty of them. Was he — could it be? What had Mr. Delessert meant by the few mysterious words he had spoken to her an hour previously? Her pretty face grew cold and hard as she calmly partook of a meal for which she had suddenly lost her appetite.

Captain Fordyce, reading her mind with his usual



skill, though apparently he did not once look her way, was angry and uneasy. Some kind of an understanding existed between that tailor's masterpiece and his shy New England wild flower. He saw it in the few words they addressed to each other, although the man was a model of reticent propriety, and the girl was cool and almost repellent in her remarks to him.

He listened to a question from the young man. "Are you going to venture on deck this afternoon?"

Nina politely but frigidly informed him that she did not know.

"The sea is not calm yet," he observed, smoothly, "you had better have an escort."

"Mrs. Fordyce is going up on the bridge with me," observed the man at the head of the table, calmly surveying them both over his coffee-cup.

Nina remained severely non-committal until lunch was over, and her husband requested her to go and put on a warm jacket, and meet him by the large lamp outside the library.

Then she made a gesture of dissent. Her impulse was to do nothing of the kind. To be disposed of in this arbitrary fashion was irritating to the last degree, especially in view of the partial and exciting revelations made to her by the young man of fascinating



manners. She had better shut herself up in her room for the rest of the day. But it was so small and so dreary, and these new thoughts would be so teasing. Perhaps she could force that delinquent 'Steban into some admissions if she were to skilfully question him. And the invariable presence of one of the officers on the bridge would keep him from annoying her with any lover-like nonsense; so with a sigh she relented, donned a heavy jacket, pulled a tight-fitting cap over her brown head, and obediently made her way in the direction of the big lamp.



## CHAPTER VIII.

### BEWARE THE FURY OF A PATIENT MAID.

THE fresh air was delicious after the confined atmosphere below ; and while Captain Fordyce was helping Nina up the bridge ladder, she saw with joy that her unconscious ally had not failed her, — the first officer was at his post.

She got up on a high seat where she could look far out over the great waves plunging and tossing about in their rough sport. For half an hour she was left to her own devices ; and she almost forgot her tribulations in watching the fleet porpoises tearing through the water in their headlong career, and occasional shoals of whales blowing in the distance. There were sea-gulls, too. The murky background of the sky threw out in bold relief the dazzling whiteness of their wings as they gracefully circled about the ship, and while watching their frequent darting movements she repeated half-aloud a quotation from one of her well-thumbed school-books :



“ ‘The silver-winged sea-fowl on high  
Like meteors bespangle the sky,  
Or dive in the gulf, or triumphantly ride  
Like foam on the surges, the swans of the tide.’ ”

“What are you saying?” asked Captain Fordyce, coming to her end of the bridge.

She shook her head obstinately.

“Ah! you will not repeat it, and that reminds me: I have forgotten to make an apology for bringing you up here against your will.”

She pressed her lips together, and from her high seat looked over his shoulder at the first officer, who was pacing up and down the bridge before them.

Captain Fordyce went on, in a lower voice: “I wanted to get you away from that man Delessert’s attentions. There is something about him that I do not like.”

“You are suspicious,” she retorted, coldly; “you have no right to assume so much authority over my movements.”

The first officer was at the other end of the bridge now, standing with his back to them, his attention fully concentrated on a distant ship. Nina wished earnestly that her last remark could be recalled, for it had transformed her husband into an ardent and determined lover.



“No right! I have the best right in the world. When I see you putting your fingers in the fire, you foolish girl, I shall be the first to pull them out.”

Nina was overawed, yet not totally subdued; and leaning forward, she saucily whispered a few words in the vicinity of his forehead: “My fingers are my own. If I choose to burn them it is none of your business.”

His black eyes met hers with a masterful light. “Try it, darling, and see; those fingers are mine;” and lightly touching them as he spoke, he went tramping away.

Nina shrugged her shoulders. It had come to the worst. He would not for an instant allow her to forget the hateful fetter that bound her to him. Their marriage, instead of being dropped, forgotten, no marriage at all, was to be made an excuse for the vilest tyranny. Oh, how angry she was! and she glared indignantly down at his collected face, for he had again approached and was saying something to her. She pulled herself together to hear it.

“I have ordered tea in the chart-room for you at eight bells. You will come, will you?”

“Not if it is to be a tea with you alone.”

He favoured her with a half-amused half-impatient shrug of his broad shoulders; then, after saying,



"You flatter yourself, such a thought never came into my head," he went away.

Not until the sweet-toned bell on the quarter-deck rang out eight strokes did he approach her again. "It is four o'clock now," he said, lifting her down from her high seat.

They descended to the deck, and he told his servant, who was waiting for him, to go and ask Mrs. Grayley and Captain Eversleigh whether they would give him the pleasure of their company to tea in the chart-room. Then with a brief, "Are you satisfied?" he went up the steps and opened the door for her.

Nina followed him slowly and sat down on a stool in the corner.

"Will you have the kindness to take a seat farther away from me?" she said, when he turned his steps toward a stool next her own. But the request came too late; he had already seated himself.

"Nina," he said, resting an arm on his knee, and deliberately stroking his heavy moustache while he bent forward to obtain a complete view of her, "to hear you talk at times, and to watch your actions, one would imagine that you hate me. I have been hoping that, since that ceremony two days ago, you would be different."

"So I do hate you," she cried, pushing his black



coat sleeve aside. "I hate any man, who, forgetting that he is the natural protector of woman, becomes her persecutor."

Then, with a passing thought that this was an uncommonly neat speech for a tyro, she launched herself fully on a tide of abuse.

She informed him that she was burdened by the grievances of a lifetime, that she was essentially practical and matter-of-fact, and that she hated a mystery as she hated sin. She had through long, long years chafed against the galling chain of circumstances that bound her to him. It was an insult to her, a creature with a will and judgment of her own, to have been born a slave, to have no means of freeing herself.

"By some means or other you got me into your power," she uttered, in a voice of quiet, concentrated scorn; "you have tyrannised over me, married me, and in addition to this cowardly act, you have evaded your promises. You are a —"

She brought her goadings to an abrupt stop, for, with his dark face absolutely purple from some emotion, he had suddenly got up, turned his back on her, and was looking out the window.

She had made him angry. In a minute he would be demanding an apology for the plain language she



had just uttered. Well, she was in for his displeasure now. She might as well free her mind of every bit of dissatisfaction, every demand for the future lurking in it.

"It is all true," she said, sullenly; "and I won't take it back, not a word of it. You would be a far better man to-day, if everybody had told you the truth about yourself as faithfully as I have done. I am not half as much afraid of you as — as those people you call my parents were. Heaven only knows," desperately, "how you bewitched them, and made them take charge of me. And you have brought me on this voyage to make me fall in love with you, and strengthen your claim to me; but I won't, I won't, I won't."

She was not shrieking as she usually did in her childish fits of temper. She was progressing, yes, certainly progressing, and the man at the window wearily shrugged his shoulders. This was a more womanly rage. He preferred the childish one. It was more abusive, but not so taunting, so stinging.

Nina, exhausted and trembling as she never before had been after an explosion of wrath, had sunk back on her stool. She had won a victory. She had made him angry, and he would not trouble her again for some time. She wondered how angry he was.



He could not go into a temper one minute and out of it the next as she could. Now if his resentment would only last until they got to England —

Just at that moment the not unusual sight of a pocket-handkerchief caused an entire revulsion of feeling in her quarrelsome breast. It was one with "Esteban Fordyce" stamped in one corner, and it lay on the table before her. It was beautifully white and clean, but so coarse, so very coarse. She drew hers from her pocket, — a tiny perfumed piece of muslin, with an edging of valuable lace. What a contrast! She spread it over as much of her face as it would cover, and began to cry stealthily. In a minute it was drenched. She threw it under the table, and took up the other more substantial one.

She was grieving very quietly; still the man at the window must hear her, yet he said never a word. Well, she had called him a coward, and a man does not like to hear that word even from the lips he loves best.

"'Steban," she said, after a time, in a very low and miserable voice, "if I said anything to hurt your feelings, I am sorry for it."

Still he did not turn his face to her, and she began to wonder whether she had been a righteously indignant victim or a base ingrate. Despite



her slavery, she had certainly been well, nay, handsomely, treated. Her health, morals, and education had received enough attention to make them perfect. She had had articles of luxury that the mother of her adoption had frequently protested against as being better fitted for royalty than for a young person in her station of life; and — sharpest pang of all — to procure all this, the man before her had had to undergo not only the frightful loneliness of which he had spoken in the morning, but also toils, privations, risk of life. The thought was maddening, and she sprang from her seat and went boldly up to him.

“’Steban,” she said, with a plaintive sob, “I am ashamed of myself. Will you forgive me?”

He twisted his head away and tried to evade her, but she was resolute. She mounted a chair, leaned one hand on his shoulder, that was quivering with impatience, or restlessness, or wrath, or perhaps all three, and, bending forward, gazed curiously into his face.

One look was enough, for he was quietly and enjoyably laughing at her. She was about to get down, to beat an ignominious retreat to her own room, when he seized her with a murmured, “You small Amazon, I will talk to you by and by.” He



carried her across the room. "There is some one coming — sit there," he said, putting her in a chair. Then, with an impassive face, he held open the door.

Captain Eversleigh was just entering. He threw the flushed, panting girl a surprised glance, then picked up her cap that had fallen off during one of her bursts of eloquence. This did not add to her composure, and she intently studied the pattern of the carpet, until the entrance of Merdyce with a tray effected a diversion. Mrs. Grayley was too ill to appear, so it devolved upon her to pour out the tea.

The fear that the two men, though apparently quite taken up with each other, — Captain Eversleigh in uttering a flow of small talk, and Captain Fordyce in listening, — were in reality watching her, made her hand tremble as she put the sugar into the fragile cups with the butterfly handles. Suddenly and awkwardly she let the sugar-tongs fall into the cream-pitcher.

Captain Eversleigh was so near that the white fluid splashed over the front of his dark coat. She knew by the quick glance he cast her from under his light eyelashes that he thought she did it on purpose. This, together with her recent agitation, quite took away her remnant of fortitude, and she



burst into a hysterical, Bacchante laugh. For politeness' sake her companions tried to join her, but their share of the merriment was forced, and soon languished and died.

In her anxiety to get away, it appeared to her that they would never stop drinking tea. Captain Eversleigh's potations seemed to her — a girl unaccustomed to the habitual drinking of tea between meals — to be positively alarming, and she ventured a faint glance of remonstrance as he passed his cup for the fourth time.

“ You make tea marvellously well, Mrs. Fordyce,” he said, in a high-pitched, cheery voice ; “ but I shall not be inconsiderate enough to trouble you again. I see by the way you survey the teapot that we are boring you to death,” and, with deliberate haste, he finished at the same time his cup of tea and his discussion of English politics with Captain Fordyce. Then he took his leave, and Nina was about to glide after him, when her husband detained her.



## CHAPTER IX.

SINCE YOU REFUSE, I THREATEN.

"Sit down, Nina," he said, "I want to ask you something."

"What is it?" she inquired. Her elevation of spirit was all gone, and with it her ecstasy of resentment and rebuke. All that she was conscious of now was the helpless feeling that he was immensely clever at ferreting out her inmost thoughts. Her fears were justified by his first question.

"Who has been talking to you about me?"

"Nobody," she said, feebly.

"It was that fellow, Delessert. What did he say?"

Nina's red lips immediately exhorted each other to wise silence by a strong and mutual pressure.

Captain Fordyce saw it, and although he had no conception of the innuendoes suggested to her, he immediately resolved to find some clue for his imagination to work upon.



"I know what it was," he said, with determination; "any information from you will only second what I possess already."

The lips flew open with an eager, "How do you know?"

"Don't you suppose I see and hear a good deal in going about this steamer?"

"But you couldn't have heard this morning," she said, cunningly, "because he asked me to come away from the deck cabins, and there wasn't a soul in the music-room. So how could you hear?"

"Does he not talk to other people?"

"No," she said, promptly. "He said he wouldn't for the world. You're just pretending you've heard things."

Captain Fordyce immediately abandoned this set of tactics for another. "I should think," he said, gravely, "that a wife's sense of honour would prevent her from listening to insinuations against her husband."

A deeper cloud overshadowed her mobile face. "That's just the trouble, 'Steban. He hinted and suggested. If he had said things right out, wouldn't I have been mad with him!"

"What were the insinuations?"

"There — I've been telling you," she said, peni-



tently, "and I said I wouldn't. I sha'n't say another word."

Her husband apparently made a like resolve, for he, too, sat speechless. How long was he going to keep her? and she restlessly drew out her watch, then made a motion as if to rise. A hand, however, was extended before her. She must sit there until she made further revelations. "I will not," she determined, obstinately; but not a minute later a new thought entered her variable mind, and she made a slight movement indicative of curiosity.

She wisely waited, and after a time she said, hesitatingly, "'Steban —"

"Nina —"

She was nervously playing with his handkerchief, and, as if it supplied a suggestion, she raised her head. "Why do I have a fine handkerchief and you a coarse one?"

"There you are grappling with one of the heavy problems of life."

"Have I any right to a fine one? Was I born to anything better than you?" she went on, in the same tentative manner.

A light broke over him, of which, however, no external flashes appeared. "That fool belongs to



her father's gang," he scornfully reflected; "he has been asked to watch me, and suspects who she is. His game is to make her think she is being kept out of something, so she will join them. Well, my man, we shall see what we shall see." Aloud he remarked, "Apparently, you may lay a just claim to more purple and fine linen than I possess."

"Could you have it if you wished it? Would it be your right, or have I really more claim to things?" she urged. "Do not mind telling me, I would not care even — even if you had made some mistakes."

"What kind of mistakes?"

"Well — I don't know. Errors in judgment, we will say."

"An error in judgment, like a poor man kidnapping a baby heiress, we will say."

"You are making fun of me," she said, faintly; but her face was crimson and he knew he was on the right track.

"And marrying her," he continued, "and then the sharp young heiress found him out."

"And forgave him," she said, quickly. "Don't forget that, 'Steban. She was cross at first, but she forgave him."



"Why did she forgive him, Nina?" and he lowered his voice and his black head at the same time until he was within an inch of her face.

She drew back stiffly. "Because she had promised solemnly to stand by him."

"When did she promise to stand by him?" he continued.

"When she married him; but he was hateful to her, and mysterious, and would not tell her things — 'Steban, whose child am I?'"

"It is almost dinner-time," he observed, blandly. "You would do well to go and comb out that tousled, brown thicket."

"I know that Mrs. Danvers is not my mother," she said, intensely. "It is cruel to keep me in suspense. Is my mother living, 'Steban?'"

"No," he growled.

"Was she like Mrs. Danvers?"

"No, — she was an angel."

"And my father, 'Steban?"

"What is the matter with Mr. Danvers?"

"He is not my father, — who is?"

"I don't know anything about him," and he resolutely turned his back on her.

She pursued him with questions, but he was deaf to them; at last, however, suddenly wheeling around



with one himself, "How did you find out about Mrs. Danvers?"

"It was one day a month ago," said the girl, in a low voice.

"But how?"

"It was on account of Mr. Danvers."

"He was always doing some fool thing, — what was this one?"

"He gave me a present."

"What was it?"

"A ring."

"Didn't he give his wife anything?"

"Oh, yes, — a book. He had been to Boston and he thought he would please us so much. It was pitiful. He saw she was annoyed, but he didn't know what it was about, and went out of the room."

"And she pitched into you."

"Yes, she said you would be angry with him for giving me such handsome presents, and I thought what a strange thing for a mother to say; then it came over me like a flash, — 'This woman isn't my mother.'"

"Did you tell her?"

"No, I ran up-stairs."

"And cried."

"And cried, 'Steban.'"



"How did you feel?" he asked, curiously.

"How did I feel?" she repeated, musingly. "I felt, just for one dreadful minute, sick and faint and dizzy. It seemed as if the whole world were tumbling to pieces. Of course she had been jealous before, but in such little ways that I didn't mind. This was such bad jealousy that it staggered me. I thought, 'Is this my own mother?' Then when it came over me that she wasn't, I didn't care so much. I suppose own mothers are never jealous?"

"Sometimes they are," he muttered.

Nina drew a long breath. "Then a home like this must be a purgatory."

"I could tell you stories," he said, hurriedly, "but pshaw! — you haven't the nerve. I will not hasten your knowledge of the ugly secrets of life. I suppose, child, you would have been glad to see me walking in just then?"

"I put your picture on the pillow," she said, fervently; "I built a little fort of handkerchiefs around it, all but the eyes, to keep the tears off —"

She broke off, for his black, scintillating eyes were bent on her with the expression that she did not like. "I had only you to turn to," she said, coldly. "Will you tell me some more about my real parents?"



"No, dear crybaby."

"Then I shall apply to that young man."

"Very well, apply to him — and regret it."

"He is very handsome," she said, aggravatingly.

"Very."

"And young."

"Quite a baby like yourself."

"I like him," she said, tauntingly.

"But you would not cry over his photograph."

She sprang up, opened her mouth to make a response, thought better of it, and, with a threatening frown, ran down the steps to the deck.



## CHAPTER X.

### A GIRL'S WILL IS THE WIND'S WILL.

AT dinner-time the man in command of the *Merri-mac* was by no means jealous, although Nina had no words nor looks for him. For she was not happy in ignoring him. He knew it, — felt it in every fibre of his being.

What a little beauty she was, with her light head and her fascinating manner, — so lively with him, so quiet and guarded with strangers! He was madly in love with her now, just like a young fool of a fellow. Extravagant terms of adoration floated through his mind, and, with the ardency of twenty, he longed for the time to come when he would be permitted to utter them.

He had loved her for years, but not like this. He had kept her in a secret chamber of his heart, ready to be brought out for contemplation and admiration when he had a moment's leisure; but now that she was with him in *propria persona*, lawfully and irrevocably united to him, he was never free from



her bewildering presence, — never for one instant. Sleeping, waking, following the exacting demands of his duty, her teasing, roguish face was ever before him ; her light eyes gazed steadily into his dark ones ; he was haunted by the ringing words, “ Mine, mine, yet not mine.”

It was balm to his soul that she did not like the exquisite Delessert. “ Probably sees he hasn’t as much brains as I have,” he communed comfortably with himself, “ and has taken a grudge against him on account of my warning, although she is too obstinate to acknowledge it. Her attention has left him now, — gone wandering off to the birds and flowers. What is she pondering, I wonder? Some of the deep, unutterable thoughts of girlhood, that she neither could nor would utter.

“ The young coxcomb had better take care,” he went on to himself, “ or he will get a setback. She has been strictly brought up, my young man, and will resent any familiarity even if the slightest ;” and he dropped his exultant eyes to the table-cloth, as Nina quietly and decidedly rebuked her neighbour by a gesture when he offered her the polite and harmless civility of paring a refractory orange.

“ You have done for yourself this time, my man,” pursued Captain Fordyce, with satisfaction, as Nina



left her place, and, steadying herself by means of outstretched hands laid against the swaying walls and dodging chairs, skilfully piloted herself from the room. She said nothing to her husband as she passed him; but he looked over his shoulder and correctly guessed her destination to be Miss Marsden's room.

Before knocking at the door she paused, and pressed her face against the cold glass of the port-hole beside it. A sweet and regretful wish for her home came over her. She would like to be with her parents, — no, not her parents, — the two people whom she considered to be her parents. They were very dear to her. She would never forget them, never. 'Steban must take her back to them very soon.

She started as she heard her name pronounced in a singularly pleasing voice, and, turning around, saw that Mr. Delessert was standing beside her.

"I fear I have offended you in some way," he said, in a contrite tone.

"Oh, no, you did not offend me," she said, shyly. "That is, not much."

"I am glad you are not deeply incensed," he went on, with a relieved air. "It emboldens me to ask a great favour of you."



Although Nina gave him no encouragement beyond an attentive silence, he went on, "Is it your intention to spend the evening with Miss Marsden?"

Nina was surprised at his knowledge of the name and habitation of a person who had not yet made a public appearance; but she said, graciously, "Yes, if she wants me."

"If she does not, will you come to the library and play whist? Mrs. Grayley is much better. She wished me to ask you."

"I don't know how to play."

There were signs of a baffled purpose on his face rather than of disappointment. After some reflection, he said, "Perhaps you would like to go and walk on deck."

"Captain Fordyce asked me not to go up again to-night. The decks are so shaky."

He extended a shapely white hand. "Good night, then. I must not detain you. Perhaps to-morrow you will allow me the pleasure of teaching you how to play cards?"

"I don't think I want to know," she said, seriously; "they do lots of harm; but I'll teach you a very funny thing if you can find some dominoes."

He gravely assured her that he would be charmed,



and was just about leaving her when he hesitated and turned back. "I beg your pardon, but I heard Captain Fordyce call you by a very odd and pretty name."

"What was it?" she asked, wonderingly.

"Nina Stephana, or Stephanie, was it?"

"Oh! Nina Stephana, — he sometimes says it. Stephana is my middle name."

"Indeed, it is a pleasing one. Strange that it should be the feminine of your husband's name."

"Yes," said Nina, guardedly, "Esteban is certainly the Spanish for Stephen."

"It seems as if your parents must have known of your approaching fate," he remarked, mildly, and without emphasis.

"Yes, doesn't it?" she replied, naïvely.

"I dare say he was attracted by the similarity of names."

Nina was fidgeting with the ends of ribbon hanging from her belt. "See here," she said, suddenly dropping them, and speaking with the utmost simplicity, "you remember what you were telling me this morning?"

"Our conversation lingers most pleasantly with me."

"About my husband, and knowing a lady called



Nina who has so much money, and who lost a little girl, and that my husband knew her, too."

"Pardon me, I don't think I was quite so exact. I said he might possibly know her."

"Well, I must have got confused. I didn't rightly understand what you said; but anyway it made me feel bad and suspicious of my husband, because—well, never mind why—and I promised you I wouldn't say anything about it lest it might hurt his feelings. But he is so clever he just found out, and I think perhaps I had better not talk any more about him or about myself; for he will tell me everything all in good time; but I will talk of anything else. Is it a bargain?" and she held out a little frank hand.

Just for one instant he was touched,—he, the hunter in search of prey. There was a relaxation in the mask of habitual reserve that he wore, a softening of the faint but hard lines about the drooping moustache. "It is a bargain, certainly," he said, quietly, and he pressed the fingers confidingly entrusted to him, and stood respectfully silent as she nodded a gay "Good-bye" and rapped on the door beside her.

Upon being bidden to enter, she went in and seated herself on the extreme edge of the couch



opposite the berth where lay the tall young lady from Boston.

The girl was the personification of health and good-humour, as she sat with lips parted, white teeth gleaming in a merry, childish smile, and eyes fixed steadily on her languid but quietly observing companion. However, she would not talk. She was not accustomed to the presence of French maids, and her aversion was so plainly marked that Miss Marsden humoured her, by saying, "Marie, go for a walk."

Miss Marsden was decidedly better. She had ceased wishing to be thrown to the fishes, and had even begun to take a feeble interest in the affairs of persons about her. This girl seemed particularly entertaining to her, and Marie had brought her a very spicy bit of gossip, from Lady Forrest's maid, with regard to the black-looking captain who was so domineering and unkind to this "preetty, preetty leetle wife," who, in her turn, did not care "at all, at all," about him.

Miss Marsden made up her mind to set her talking; and, in a ladylike yet determined manner, she was soon dragging from the unsuspecting Nina various particulars with regard to her past life.



The country girl was no match for the city girl, and speedily fell into the trap, not of direct questions, but of responding to roundabout and apparently aimless remarks.

"I didn't say Captain Fordyce was thirty-eight," she observed, after a time, in surprised vexation.

Miss Marsden had found out all she wished to know, so she said, with a superior air, "No, child, but what was the use of the dates you mentioned if I did not put them together? I was always good at arithmetic at school."

"So was I," retorted Nina; "but I can't make out how old you are."

"You never will. If you notice, I carefully avoid figures in my conversation. It will be a good rule for you to follow ten years hence."

"Then you are ten years older than I am," said Nina, pouncing upon her recommendation.

"Not quite, pussy-cat," said the young lady; "but I won't tease you any more with questions, for now you have found me out, and will settle down into New England obstinacy. What kind of passengers have we? Who are the most interesting ones?"

Nina's eyes sparkled. "A little wee mousie and a big British lion."

"Sir Hervey and Lady Forrest," said Miss Mars-



den, coupling this information with some obtained from Marie.

"Yes, and a big light-haired dog with an honest kind of a bark."

"Who is that?"

"Captain Eversleigh, a land, not a sea captain."

"Oh, that English officer. Marie told me about him. Who else is there?"

"A tall, thin giraffe of a boy called Maybury."

"Dreadful! And the rest of the menagerie?"

"A very beautiful sleek creature with velvety eyes."

"Man or woman?"

"Man. I think he's like a panther."

"Beware of his tricks, then."

"He's a nice panther, — a kind, polite one. Not growly and ugly like a bear."

"Ah, there you have got in some one I know," said Miss Marsden, teasingly.

"Bears have good qualities," said Nina, composedly.

"You are not in love with your husband, my dear," reflected Miss Marsden; "or, if you are, you are so artlessly artful about it that one can't make you out." Then she said aloud, "Will you hand me that bottle? I have a wretched headache."



Nina at once dissolved in compassion. "Do let me smooth your head. Mamma says I can do it nicely."

"Well, if you like, child. Why don't you accent the last a in that word?"

"I am not English, I am American," said the girl, warmly.

"You need not fear; no one will ever take you for an English girl," replied her companion, as she brushed back the hair from her white forehead in order to allow Nina's fingers to wander over it.

"You are a kind little thing," she murmured, after a few minutes.

Nina, used to the constant companionship of members of her own sex, had missed them sorely during the last three days; and, touched by the gracefully uttered words, she bent down and kissed the forehead she was stroking.

A tear escaped from Miss Marsden's eyelid. She put up her hand, wiped it away, and gave Nina an affectionate tap.

"Miss Marsden," said the girl, hesitatingly, and after some minutes of silence, "I want to ask you something."

"Well, child, what is it?" said her new friend, with patronising kindness.



"It's about men. When they're just married don't you think they ought to tell their wives everything they know?"

"Of course," said the young lady, ironically.

"But they don't, do they?"

"No; they usually start out with a mouth full of lies."

"About everything, do you mean?"

"Oh, no, only some things. They wouldn't trouble to lie about everything."

"Suppose you had a husband and he told you a story, what would you do?"

"I'd tell him another."

Nina laughed. "But suppose you couldn't think of one. Don't you think you ought to make him confess and repent?"

"Yes, every time you found him out. But don't try, my dear. They are too sharp for us. If you find them out in one thing they'll try another.

"Men are worse than women, aren't they?"

"Incomparably worse," said the young lady.

"Sigh no more, ladies, sigh no more,  
Men were deceivers ever;  
One foot in sea and one on shore,  
To one thing constant never.'"



Nina was about to make a remark, but closed her mouth with a snap; for the French maid was just entering the room. She hurriedly surrendered her post to her, and, bidding Miss Marsden a regretful "Good night," ran away to her room.



## CHAPTER XI.

### A REBUFF FOR ADONIS.

THE next two days were stormy. It rained steadily; and, prevented by the extreme roughness of the sea from going on deck, the passengers lounged about in the close atmosphere below, till, growing weary of the sound of their own voices, they lapsed into a dismal, moping condition.

Even Nina succumbed to the general wretchedness. They were crossing the track of a gale that was cyclonic in its tendencies; and her husband either could not or would not come below, not even for his meals or to inquire after her.

Miss Marsden did not leave her room. Nina sat with her until she drove her away, when she usually fell into the hands of the ever-waiting Delessert. How strange that on the first day at sea she should have thought one could never get tired of staring at his handsome face! Alas! in his case, "beauty soon grows familiar, fades in the eye, and palls upon the sense." For he had nothing to sustain it, no manli-



ness, no energy. He often reminded the girl — horribly enough — of something without life, a waxen image, a marble statue, even a dead man ; so perfectly emotionless, so soulless did he usually appear. What a contrast he was to the forceful, hard-working man above, who did not condescend to come to see her !

Nina's conversations with the beauty tired her greatly : and yet she kept them up, for she had shrewdness enough to perceive that Adonis really admired her ; that he made an effort to please her by keeping above flattering, semi-flirting commonplaces ; and also, most potent of all, that he had some mysterious interest in her, connected with the subject of her parentage.

True to her resolve, she would not ask him questions with regard to this interest ; and he did not volunteer information except occasionally, and in the most delicate and blameless way. If by chance she left the region of the ship and referred to some occurrence in her former life, there would be in his manner a slight infusion of animation, and he would drop some item of slight information. Then she would hastily leave the subject, until her next lapse into forgetfulness.

When Mrs. Grayley chose to leave the seclusion



of her own room during the two days of imprisonment below, Nina was faintly amused, for the lady of middle age was consumed with admiration for Mr. Delessert. Upon her appearance he was obliged to put all his small graces and accomplishments on exhibition, and she fairly worried him to invent devices for whiling away the tedium of the long hours.

When the weather permitted, and often when it did not, the piano was resorted to ; and Mr. Delessert was obliged to sing and play even at the risk of rolling off the stool several times during the performance of one piece. Upon these latter occasions, Mrs. Grayley always clapped her lily-like hands and gaily assured him that never before, off the stage, had she seen a man fall so gracefully.

He took her merriment not at all in good part, and usually wandered away. But always to come back ; for the other people on board, the men especially, for some reason or other kept themselves severely away from him. Captain Eversleigh, who at first had shown a slight preference for his society, now, Nina noticed, never addressed him, but was constantly with the tall youth Maybury.

On the evening of the last day of bad weather Nina was in Miss Marsden's room.

"It is eleven o'clock," that young lady at last



observed, "don't you think you would better go to bed?"

"Don't send me away yet," pleaded Nina; "tell me some more things about yourself."

The girl was kneeling by the lounge of her new-made friend; and, lovingly throwing an arm around her feet, she listened to stories of wanderings in Europe, until another half-hour had elapsed, when Miss Marsden insisted upon her saying good night.

"Shall I send Marie with you?" she inquired, when Nina reluctantly approached the door.

Nina darted a glance at the sleepy maid in the upper berth, shook her head and hurried from the room. With a light heart she trotted down the long passages. The Boston girl was a darling. She thoroughly approved of her. She was far more interesting to talk to than that faultfinding 'Steban. She did not miss him at all. She was glad that she had in some way offended him. She did not want to know what it was about. Very likely he was jealous of that wretched man, Delessert; and she scowled at his open cabin door that she was just passing.

A ray of light from it streamed out on the semi-dark passage; and as her pattering footsteps approached, he himself stepped out.

Nina threw him a hasty glance as he stood in the



doorway. His face was deeply flushed and he was staring boldly at her. He had been drinking, the scamp, and she shrugged her shoulders in scorn. Once or twice before she had had her suspicions; now they were confirmed. And he had left the doorpost and was blocking the passage.

She must control herself and not show wrath. That had been Mrs. Danvers's instruction with regard to drunken tramps on the Rubicon Meadows roads. "Don't cross them, but placate them and then run," and Nina scanned the way behind him.

"What do you wish?" she asked, when he seemed to have some difficulty in articulating a sentence.

He was standing gracefully flourishing one hand and trying to manage his suddenly thickened tongue. "It is with regard to the name Nina Stephana," he said, at last. "May I offer an explanation?"

His words were more courteous than his glances, and Nina, forgetting her caution, said, sharply, "No, I am in a hurry to go to my room. Please let me pass."

"Nina Stephana," he continued, in a dense voice; then he paused in order to adjust a trifling difficulty connected with balancing himself.

"Pretty name," he went on, "brute of husband — stole child."



Nina was not at all frightened. She became suddenly angry. He would slander that absent husband, would he?

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself," she snapped at him; "a young man like you to get drunk. What do you suppose will become of you when you are old? *Will* you let me go by? If you don't —"

She was furious now, and although his brain was slightly clouded, he took in her meaning. She had said that he was drunk. "Isn't enough on *Merri-mac* to overcome me," he muttered. "Pretty girl, but insulting. Must stand still, till apologise," and one of his hands went weakly wandering in search of hers.

She was so intent upon watching his face that he did manage to seize one hand in his hot grasp, one of the hands that her 'Steban always held—even when he had them against her will—as gently and cautiously as if they were rose-leaves. The drunken scamp!

"Let that go at once," she said, in a low, furious voice. "If you don't, I will call my husband and he will knock you down."

If she had been less absorbed in the present scene, and had given one glance behind her, she would have



seen that husband coming down the passage with measured tread. But her attention was fully concentrated on her companion, and his on her; and the man behind stopped short as a pink palm suddenly flew into the air and then descended mercilessly.

She was only a little thing, but she had plenty of courage, and was by no means afraid of the tall young man bending over her; and there were no half-way measures with her. She had slapped the aggressor in the face, and had done it so successfully that he was glad to let her go.

With a curious dash of sympathy in the scorn with which he regarded the tottering figure, Captain Fordyce moved toward him and laid a hand on his shoulder: "Never mind her, — get into your room."

Adonis was about to follow her, to endeavour to seize the wicked palm and press it in punishment to his lips; but now he speedily changed his mind, and in a shuffling manner proceeded to fall in with the advice given.

Captain Fordyce went after him, said a few words in his ear, then he stepped outside.

Nina had paused away down there in the half-darkness, and was looking back. If her enemy had fallen, it would have been like her to return and give



him assistance. But now he had safely disappeared, and there was her husband.

She did not like the expression of his face. How unfortunate that he should have come on the scene just now ! He would think that she had been flirting with that miserable young man. Should she go back and explain ? No, she was afraid of that black Spanish temper. She would wait until morning ; and, wisely wagging her head, she scampered the rest of the way to her room with the guilty air of a wanderer returning home.

However, she loitered by the doorway and listened with ears in the air. Her husband had followed her for some distance. Now he was going up a near stairway and giving vent to his displeasure by that most common and convenient of all methods, — violently banging a door. She shivered, and with a pagan wish that some dire calamity might befall the young man who had been the cause of her mortification, she went to bed.

For some reason or other she could not sleep. There was a thorn in her pillow ; and although she shook it vigorously, it would not be driven out ; therefore in impatient, healthy restlessness she lay awake, her brain a jumble of thought, pierced occasionally by the clear, weird sound of the boatswain's



whistle as it blew at intervals through the long, long night.

At seven o'clock she got up, and, with a face "tinged with wan from lack of sleep," looked out the window. The storm was over. She had scarcely noticed its subsidence during the night, but now she saw that they had come to a glorious day. The air was keen and cool, the eastern sky was adorned with crimson and gold streaks, the morning sun was flashing on the deep green waves, and another quotation from her school-books leaped into her mind.

"'The waters burn  
With his enkindling rays,  
No sooner touched than they return  
A tributary blaze.'"

Dazzled by the glare, she turned away; she reflected that, as Miss Marsden had promised to take a walk with her before breakfast if the day were perfectly fine, she would have ample opportunity to admire the beauties of sea and sky from the vantage-ground of the deck. She would also prefer to have her first meeting with her husband, after the encounter of last night, away from the breakfast-table, and in the presence of a third person.

Therefore she scrambled through her dressing, and in a very few minutes closed her door behind



her, and stepping outside, stumbled against the stewardess, who was passing by. She received good-naturedly Nina's penitent apology, and asked her whether she was going on deck.

"You'd better have your rubbers, mem, and some one to hold on to. The decks are awful wet. Have you heard about the capting?"

"What about him?" asked Nina, catching her breath.

"He had a bad fall last night."

"A fall, — is he hurt?"

"Pretty bad, mem. He's got a long cut down his cheek."

Nina laid a hand on her heart, and leaned up against the wall. "When did it happen?"

"Between eleven and twelve. You see he was walkin' toward the bridge. He didn't notice a heavy sea boardin'. It knocked him down; he struck an iron bar and lost some blood. But the doctor fixed him."

"Is he — is he walking about?" asked Nina, with a white face, and stammering as she usually did when much moved.

"Yes, mem, but I guess he'll go to bed now it's turned fine. He don't rest much in storms."

Nina suddenly became absent-minded, and the



woman took her departure. Left alone, she indulged in a guilty shudder and a confused soliloquy. Probably she had been the cause of this accident. 'Steban, horrified at last evening's escapade in which she had been so blameless, had rushed on deck, and, blinded by rage, had forgotten to be watchful and had been struck down. He might have been killed; in which case she would have been the cause of his death.

In a transport of compassion and fear she drew her cloak about her and clambered on deck. She paused in the doorway and looked out. Storms leave their traces, and though the sky was so clear the sea had by no means calmed down; and the *Merrimac* rolled steadily from side to side, her decks for the greater part of the time covered with water. Nina could not get out. Planks about two feet high were placed on the thresholds of the doors to keep the water from coming in. If she ventured out it would be at the risk of being washed overboard. In deep discontent she stared about her. No one passed until some sailors came to heave the log. She watched the long line reeling out, then mechanically counted the knots as it was pulled in. The cheerful "heave ho" of the men's voices prevented her from hearing some one splashing through the



water. Not until a shadow darkened the doorway did she turn around. Captain Fordyce was just passing. His appearance was so unexpected and so singular that it drew from her a nervous, hysterical laugh.

The sickly hue of his face changed slightly, and he hastened his steps to get away from the sound of her voice.

"Oh, how bad I am!" she ejaculated. "He will think I am making fun of him, and I am so sorry. I must get out;" and, desperately climbing and scrambling over the planks, she fell into a wave that was running down the deck. The water surged coldly around her ankles; she felt herself slipping. The sailors had finished their work and were going away. The only person in sight was the rubber-clad form disappearing around a distant capstan.

"Captain Fordyce!" she called, despairingly.

He apparently did not hear her.

"Captain Fordyce," she cried, indignantly, "*will* you come back?"

Her voice impressed him this time, and he turned around. His determined young wife had fallen on her knees in the water; with one hand she held back a tangle of curls that the wind had blown



about her face; with the other she groped after a slipper sailing merrily toward the lee scuppers. With a few quick strides he was beside her, and, lifting her up, attempted to put her in the doorway. But she wriggled away from him, and took hold of the iron railing that ran around the deck cabins.

"You must not stand here," he said, shortly.

She gazed earnestly at his averted face. Her eyes were full of tears, her voice seemed to have left her. "It must be his strange appearance," she reflected, mournfully. "Those bandages are dreadfully disfiguring. One of his eyes is quite closed; his face is swollen, and the corner of his mouth is half-way up his cheek: and perhaps it is my fault. 'Steban," she said, tentatively, "I heard about your fall a few minutes ago. I am so sorry — Good gracious! what an immense wave! Do you think it is coming over?"

"Yes."

She threw a hurried glance about her. The *Merrimac* was lurching heavily. Along her sides the waves seemed hollowed out in a huge valley; other waves rose behind them like a range of hills. A dizzy feeling came over her, and she felt as if she were slipping for ever into the yawning gulf before



her. "'Steban, 'Steban!" she shrieked, imploringly, as she clung to him, "don't let me fall."

His arms were strong. One of them was around her, the other grasped a stanchion. She felt perfectly safe now, and her heart beat a little quicker. His face was still averted. Jealousy, the rage of man, had probably entire possession of him; but just for an instant when they went down, down, till the rail that surrounded the deck dipped into the sea, the grasp of his arm tightened, the expression of his face changed. But when the ship righted herself he was again cold and forbidding, and all her courage died away. Dropping her eyes, she said, meekly, "I will go in now."

"Wait an instant," he said, quietly. "You must give up talking to that young man who has been amusing you during the past two days, and who was having so touching an interview with you last evening."

"He is a very nice young man," said Nina, feebly.

"He is a professional gambler."

"A what?" she exclaimed, flinging up her head.

"A gambler, — a man whose business it is to fleece any person he meets who is silly enough to engage in games of chance with him, and" — meaningly — "he likes to play for high stakes."



Nina restlessly moved one of her wet feet about the moist deck. And this was the sort of man she had allowed to talk to her, — to be friendly with her.

“A short time ago,” her husband went on, “he got into trouble on a French steamer because one of his victims shot himself.”

“Why did you not tell me this before?” murmured the girl, resentfully.

“Suppose I wanted you to learn a lesson.”

“You didn’t want me to learn a lesson,” she said, vehemently. “I don’t believe you knew, for sure, what he was like till just now: that sort of thing is *not* permitted. The captain of a ship —”

“Has no right whatever to control the amusements of his passengers unless they interfere with the exercise of his duties. I really wished to give you a lesson, though I did not know surely how bad he was till yesterday. The longer I live, the more I wonder over the guilelessness of women — good women — in making acquaintances.”

“I hate suspicious people,” retorted Nina.

“You must go below and change those wet clothes,” he said, peremptorily lifting her inside the door, “and don’t wear house slippers on deck again.”



She discontentedly made her way to her room. The interview had not been satisfactory. "He was dreadfully cross," she muttered; "and he can look as disagreeable with one eye as most people can with two."



## CHAPTER XII.

### AN UNSATISFACTORY INTERVIEW.

SHE hurried through her second toilet in order that she might go and see Miss Marsden before the breakfast-bell rang. On her way to her a few minutes later, she met Mr. Delessert, who was coming from his room. His attire was, as usual, irreproachably elegant. There was not a wrinkle in the dark blue clothes that fitted so admirably his straight, well-proportioned figure. The knot in his necktie was perfection itself ; and his carefully brushed hair and smooth moustache threw her recent attempts at hair-brushing quite into the shade.

In the midst of her newly conceived horror of the man, she wondered whether he would dare to speak to her. Not he ; with a complete control over his features, he absolutely looked through her blushing, indignant face to the wall behind. Judging by his expressionless countenance there was not a living creature near him.

“ The coward,” she angrily reflected. “ His spirit



is as base as his face is fair." Then she turned her back on his retreating form, and pursued her way to Miss Marsden's room.

The latter young lady did not wish to go to the breakfast-table, and Nina refused to leave her. "I don't like the panther," she said, evasively. "His spots are beginning to show. His smooth skin is quite changed. I shall not go to the table again unless you are there to take the seat between us."

Miss Marsden was curious; but she could obtain no further details from her with regard to the spots, beyond the bald information that they were plainly visible, — even though she sent Marie from the room under pretence of getting coffee and toast for their breakfast.

For half the morning they amused themselves in their usual way. Miss Marsden conversed in her semi-sarcastic fashion, usually on the frailties of mankind, and Nina intently listened. So absorbed with each other were they, that the first lunch-bell rang before the young lady had left her berth.

Nina attempted to assist Marie, but the operation of dressing after so many days in bed was a tedious one; and the attempt, owing to Nina's high spirits, degenerated into a frolic.

"Marie, go get us a tray," said Miss Marsden, at



last, pressing a hand against her shaking side. "Child, I have laughed till I am weak. You are better than a chest full of medicine. After lunch, we will try to effect a combination of all these garments."

Nina gazed at her in admiration when she was fully dressed. "You are like the tall green poplars on the meadows at home," she said, impulsively. "I wish I were like you."

"Nonsense, child; men like a rosebud like you far better than a poplar like me."

Nina shook her head unbelievably, and trotted after her to the deck. Marie established them both comfortably in steamer chairs, in the midst of shawls and rugs, then she betook herself to the society of Lady Forrest's maid.

The day was now perfect. The sea had calmed down, save for a long languid swell, and the sky was still dazzlingly bright. Nina surveyed the unusual number of men, women, and children struggling on deck, and asked Miss Marsden whether she would like to speak to some of them.

"No," said the young lady, lazily, "I don't care for people whose antecedents are unknown to me; I think it is better to keep them all at a distance. Women cannot be too careful of the associates they



choose when travelling alone. Who is that tall ugly man with the eye-glass staring at us?"

"Captain Eversleigh."

"Impertinence," and Miss Marsden lowered her parasol.

"Why, he is the nice British dog with the honest bark," said Nina. "Captain Fordyce introduced him to me, so he is all right."

"Good dogs sometimes have to suffer for the sins of bad ones," said Miss Marsden, composedly. "Nevertheless, I have confidence in your husband in every way. He is said to be the best captain on this line, and he has certainly brought us admirably through this gale."

"What do you call a good dog?" inquired Nina, with a gentle questioning air.

"A good dog is one that is clever, watchful, and that does exactly what I tell him."

"Just what I call a good dog," said Nina, triumphantly; "not a snapping cross creature, always heading you off, and driving you where you don't want to go."

"Take into account what you are, though," said Miss Marsden, sharply. "Suppose you are a bad, wandering lammie with a proclivity for rushing into briars and thorns?"



"Wouldn't I feel them?" asked Nina, warmly. "Wouldn't they scratch me and make me back out?"

"But you might lose some wool."

"Well, that wouldn't matter to the dog."

"It would mean loss of prestige to him."

"Dogs ought to mind their own business," said Nina, with such a determined set of her rosy chin that Miss Marsden bit her lip to keep from open laughter.

"If I were a lamb," she said, presently, and with her usual calm and superior air, "a mischievously disposed lamb, and had a good dog that was interested in me, and tried to keep me away from the companionship of briars, I should endeavour to reciprocate. I should propitiate the dog lest he should get discouraged. Even good dogs will bite."

Nina had apparently lost interest in the argument, and had gone to sleep. Her white lids were drooping wearily over her eyes. Her head was on her shoulder, and casting a sharp glance at her, Miss Marsden followed her example. When she was really asleep, soundly and unmistakably so, with her black head safely hidden from the scrutiny of passers-by under the shade of her red parasol, Nina glided from her chair and went stealthily away.



There was something on her mind that she must get rid of. Disagreeable as the duty was, she would not feel justified in escaping its performance. Up the bridge ladder and into the chart-room she hastened. There she hesitated an instant. Her eyes, dazzled by the glare of the sun, could perceive not one thing in the interior of the little cool, dark room.

Presently she made out the table and a chair before it. She stumbled into the latter, and, blindly reaching out her hand, seized a pen and piece of paper, and began to write, "Dear Captain Fordyce."

No, that would not do. It was too stiff, and, scratching out the "Captain Fordyce," she put "My dear Esteban." Now — how should she begin? "Though circumstances were apparently very much against me —"

That was too stilted. She drew her pen through the carefully written words, and began again: "Will you allow me to explain to you a circumstance —"

Always that word "circumstance." It turned up like a bad penny. "I don't believe it was a circumstance at all," she said, aloud, and with a vexed exclamation she dashed a heavy black line down the page, and, seizing a fresh piece of paper, wrote:



"DEAR 'STEBAN: — I wasn't flirting with that young man. I detested him from the beginning.

"NINA."

Then folding and addressing it, she uttered a profound and relieved sigh, and prepared to leave the room.

"You might as well deliver it," said a quiet voice behind her.

With a faint shriek she wheeled around. There, extended full length on the lounge, was the very man to whom she had been writing. He had been lying there watching her. "I am tired," he said, slowly. "I was trying to get forty winks by way of refreshment."

"When I came and disturbed you. Please forgive me," and, cautiously and penitently, she began to edge her way toward the door.

"Wait," he said, calmly. "I wish you to hand me that bit of paper from the table."

"I would rather have you read it after I have gone," she said, her cheeks a furious red.

"And I would rather read it now," he returned, gently. "Bring it here, Nina."

Reluctantly, and dragging her feet after her as slowly as if there were balls and chains attached, she went back, seized the paper by a corner,



and extended it to him as if it were a noxious reptile.

He took it and her hand at the same time, obliging her to stand by him while he read it. He pored over it for some minutes; then, raising his eyes to her face, he said, "So you imagine I am vexed with you?"

Nina thought of Miss Marsden's words, "Even good dogs will bite," and answered meekly in the affirmative.

"Don't you suppose I have been watching you during the last two days?"

"Have you?" she said, quickly.

He smiled. "I know every breath you draw. There is nothing of the coquette about you. You like to admire men at a distance. Near at hand they frighten you. A caress from any man but myself would send you into hysterics."

This smacked so strongly of self-conceit that Nina was goaded into a retort. "No, it doesn't," she cried, hastily.

"It doesn't," he repeated, haughtily; "it wouldn't, I suppose you mean."

"I mean what I say," she replied, stubbornly.

His face, already alarmingly pale, took on a yet more sickly hue. He put a hand to his head, and



raised himself on his elbow. "Nina, has that fellow dared —"

His voice choked, he was really in a passion now.

"Yes, he has dared," she said, slowly. There was a short pause; then, overcome by sudden fright at the expression overspreading his face, she rattled on, "But he only squeezed my hand, and I ran to my room and washed it. But that wasn't what I meant."

He did not speak, and she began to wonder whether excitement was a good thing for him. "How is your head now?" she asked, with concealed interest.

When he did not answer her she proceeded, "Your cheek is less swollen, now. You look quite yourself. Those bandages were not so very unbecoming; they were clean and —"

"Which hand was it?" he asked, abruptly.

She extended one trembling and seemingly agitated set of fingers. He laughed shortly and unamiably, made a slight motion toward them, then drew back.

"What did you have in mind when you said this affair was not what you meant?"

There was an ominous glitter in his eye foreshadowing approaching civilities; and Nina, with



treacherous meekness, resolved to satisfy his curiosity. But she would take her own time about it, and she asked first, "Did you tell that — that creature not to speak to me?"

"Yes," he said, shortly.

"I met him and he passed me by. I thought you had been advising him. What would you do if you built a nice, nice house, and put me in it, and sailed away over the sea, and came home one day and found a beautiful young man with blue eyes and curly hair, and not a sign of a bald spot, with — with —"

She stopped in pretended bashfulness.

"With his arm around you," he said, coolly, "making love to you."

"Y-yes."

"I should say: 'Go on, sir, — may you get more satisfaction out of that amusement than I have ever done.'"

She gave him a curious child-like glance of gratification between her half-shut eyelids. "Suppose you came home when it was a black, black night, and you found me half-way out the window with the beautiful young man holding my hand, and his tall black steed standing by ready to carry us away off from you to the end of the world?"



"I should say, 'Good luck to you!' I might even give you a hand up to the tall steed's back."

"Did you ever get with naughty men that made you drink, and drink, and drink, till you were quite drunk, 'Steban?'" she asked, earnestly.

"Often," he replied, ironically. "Who was the other man who tried to flirt with you?"

"It was a good while ago," she said, with hanging head. "He didn't flirt. It was only his arm."

"Dislocated, I suppose. Well — upon what occasion?"

"Two years ago this month," she said, gently. "I remember because the roses were in bloom, and they blushed quite, quite red as they looked in the window."

"Modest roses! Well, to continue."

"I will tell you some other time," she said, precipitately.

"No, tell me now."

"Will you let go my hand if I tell you?"

"Yes."

"Truly?"

"Yes, truly."

"The beautiful young man was a dentist," she said, mischievously, "and I never saw him before, and I've never seen him since, and he just had to



put his arm around me, 'cause how could he get at my back tooth if he didn't? There, — are you satisfied now, monster?" and pulling her hand from him she ran to the other end of the room.

She was bubbling over with waggishness and mirthfulness; and if he stirred a finger she would run away from him. "I knew that all the time," he said, calmly. "You can't come over me with your tricks. Wait a minute, though. I want to give you something to read."

She prudently retreated to the steps when he approached the bookcase. "I'm not very fond of reading on this old *Merrimac*, Captain Fordyce. The screw jars my brain."

"Just as well, — you have read too much trash already," he retorted; "but I want you to go through this, every word of it. Will you promise me?"

"I suppose so. Put the book on that upper step."

"It is a French novel," he went on; "but it is a good one. Pierre Loti's '*Pêcheur d'Islande*.'"

"Is it in French?"

"Yes."

She made a wry face at him.

"You have been taught that language, which is more than I have," he said; "I read it in Eng-



lish. Come, run over a few pages of the French to me."

She shook her head and he slapped the book down on the table. "I don't think much of your gratitude. Here am I half ill, or 'sick,' as you say in Rubicon Meadows, and you won't do as much for me as you do for strangers."

"What do I do for strangers?" she asked, falteringly, and stretching her neck around the door-post.

"You drove Miss Marsden's headache away the other day. She told me."

"Does your head ache? Could I do it any good?" she asked, wistfully, reëntering the room.

"No, no, birdie," he replied, touched by her suddenly altered expression. "I have no headache; run away. I have made a vow that for the rest of the trip I shall see as little of you as possible. You need not look startled. You are not to blame, except for being the most prodigious temptation that ever flesh and blood was subjected to. I can't endure you at all. I must keep away. I see now that I did wrong to bring you on this trip. It" — with a frown and a slight blush — "has led to disagreeable complications. I find that fellow Delessert has started some smoking-room gossip to the effect that I am persecuting you with unwelcome attentions.



What? You are not crying? Upon my word, you laugh and cry as easily as you breathe."

She was not crying, although she was cowering over the table with her head on her arms. At his question she straightened herself and showed him a pitiful, quivering face. "I wish I could comfort you, 'Steban. I wish I could stay with you, but — but I can't."

She was crying now — in regular torrents — and he muttered to himself, and stared helplessly at her. "P-please don't touch me," she gasped; "I will get over it in a minute. I am very sorry to disturb you, I — I —"

She wanted him to stroke her brown head, to show that he forgave her; but he restrained himself and presently she sprang from her seat and took the book from him. He stood holding back the curtains for her, as politely and formally as if she were a duchess, and she tottered from the room as unsteadily as the characterless Adonis had entered his the evening before. After she had passed her changed and impassive husband she flashed him a grieving glance, in which resentment, approval, and bewilderment were so strangely mixed that he involuntarily muttered a compassionate, "Poor little thing!" as he went back to his sofa.



Being anxious to avoid questions, Nina ran to her room, hastily washed her face, and returned to Miss Marsden, whom she found wide-awake and watchful.

"Well," she said, as Nina slipped back into the seat beside her, "did the dog receive the lamb's overtures kindly?"

"A good dog is always reasonable," said Nina, soberly.

"Miss Marsden," she said, after a time, "you think I've been quarrelling with my husband, don't you?"

"Not quarrelling, — having a little tiff," said the young lady.

"Do you think husbands usually stand by their wives?"

"You know they don't, Miss Innocence. The book of life has been open before you, and you have read it, young as you are. Likewise endless novels, I fancy, like all girls."

"But if a woman is a man's wife, that makes him feel — well, I don't know how," said Nina, with a puzzled air.

"A man will stand by his wife because he is a born egotist. She belongs to him — is a part of him. He puts up with her faults because she has the honour of bearing his name."



“My husband loves me because I am myself,” whispered the girl against the book that she put up to her cheek, “not because I am his wife. He is a very good man.”



## CHAPTER XIII.

### A LITTLE IDLE WORD.

“WHAT a delicious evening !” Side by side, a few hours later, Miss Marsden and Nina knelt on a couch in a tiny ladies’ cabin on deck, looking out through the open window at the long, undulating line of light playing over the surface of the sunlit waves.

“How indescribably beautiful it is,” went on Miss Marsden, softly.

“‘I long to tread that path of golden rays,  
And think ’twould lead to some bright isle of rest.’”

Nina murmured an assent, and the silence was not again broken until they heard the “quaintly musical tramp” and the cheery voices of the sailors as they marched over the deck outside to take the hourly log.

They called out the number of knots they were making ; then their footsteps died away, and quietness again reigned, broken only by the gentle lapping of the waves against the side of the ship.



“Only a plank between us and death,” said Miss Marsden, with a shudder; and she incited the meditative Nina to a discussion of their chances of escape in case of accident, fire, or shipwreck. Their conjectures were brought to a premature close by hearing, in a manly voice, “Yes, I acknowledge that Mrs. Fordyce is not bad looking, but she is too unformed for my taste. I like a woman with a little more *savoir faire* than that baby-faced girl will ever have. Miss Marsden is a woman after my own heart. Her pretty pale face set off by those bands of dark hair is absolutely charming; and her repose of manner is faultless. I wonder what her first name is?”

For the next few seconds Miss Marsden and Nina carried on a dialogue composed, like that of Butler’s Spaniards, of “heads and shoulders, nods and shrugs.” They communicated to each other the intelligence that Captain Eversleigh was at the open window of his room next the ladies’ cabin; and owing to the calmness of the sea and the lack of noise about the ship, they could hear nearly every word he said.

Though convinced that they were not doing a perfectly honourable thing, they had not the necessary strength of mind to close the window. The



prospect of learning their neighbour's opinion of them was too alluring.

So they were all ears as Captain Eversleigh continued, "Stupid man, I know the little girl's name fast enough. Haven't I heard her husband growl a dozen proprietary 'Ninas?' When I said 'her,' I meant Miss Marsden. What did that dicer Delessert say is the name of the fellow that jilted her?"

Miss Marsden went through a pantomime of dumb wrath. Now she could make common cause with Nina against the panther who had been gossiping about her recreant lover. The tall youth Maybury was with Captain Eversleigh, and evidently was either sharing his window as Nina was sharing Miss Marsden's, or was at a second one; for his boyish tones of mock wrathfulness clearly floated to them.

"Seek out the villain, pick a quarrel with him, beat him to a jelly for his heartlessness."

Nina laughed under her breath, and by means of lip movement announced her surprise at this unbending of the tall, usually wordless youth.

"Bah!" whispered Miss Marsden, noiselessly, "men jabber just like girls when they are alone."

Her champion continued, "Poor girl! she looks



as fragile as a bit of my aunt's eggshell china, and Delessert said she was as jolly as a sandboy before this happened."

Mr. Maybury took up the strain. "And the scamp that took the roses out of her cheeks is now transplanting them in the affections of another girl, according to our Jack of cards informant. Seek him out, Eversleigh; 'cudgel him like a dog,' to quote old Will; persuade Miss Anonyma Marsden to 'doff the willow garland' for the low deceiver, and don a bit of orange blossom for you."

"What an utter idiot!" murmured Miss Marsden, in annoyance, and trying to hush Nina, who had lost control of herself and had buried her head in the sofa cushions. In trying to suppress her, Miss Marsden lost a part of the conversation; and when she resumed her place at the window she found that Captain Eversleigh had entered upon a more egotistical branch of the subject.

"Can you not suggest some way of gaining their favour?" he was asking, impatiently.

"One is a society woman, and the other a shy robin," replied Mr. Maybury, in an oracular tone of voice.

"They both probably understand music," continued Captain Eversleigh. "Would it not be jolly



if we could get them to make some use of the piano and organ during these everlasting days? This ceaseless stupidity will soon turn my brain. Fordyce won't come out of his shell, Delessert we have cut, and as all the eligible people but those girls are ill, it leaves us only a few cads of men to fall back on. That little beggar in the glaring tweed suit will worry me into my grave if some one doesn't stop him from teasing away from me all those two shilling cigars I bought of the Spanish consul for the voyage."

"Leave your cigar-case behind you when you go to the smoking-room," suggested Mr. Maybury. Then he burst out laughing. "By Jove, though, it's as good as a play to see the little divvy's nose going when you approach."

"My precious Havanas shall not waste their fragrance any longer on that cockney," grumbled Captain Eversleigh; "a twopenny cigarette is good enough for him. Maybury, you are going to sleep. Rouse yourself, old boy, and sing 'Press the Grape;' and he began a drinking-song in well-controlled, pleasant tones.

Presently his friend joined in with a voice so opposed to his conversational tones that, overcome by his raven-like croakings, they both exploded in



peals of laughter. Their mirth was infectious, and hastily closing the window Miss Marsden and Nina too gave way to merriment.

Nina was the first to recover composure, and she took to blinking at her slightly confused companion. Then a match-making ardour rose within her. Captain Eversleigh apparently fancied Miss Marsden. Why should he not be encouraged? Perhaps in time he might take the place of that bad man who had forsaken her. Also she herself would enjoy talking to the tall boy who had expressed his admiration for her. She would not flirt with him. Oh, no, she would merely talk soberly and quietly as befitted a married woman. She must not be gay nor forward; for in that case she would annoy her Spaniard. She would, however, like him to see that, even though he had deserted her himself, and had driven away the scapegrace Delessert, she was not at a loss for companionship.

"I dare say they are lonely," she observed, bringing her cogitations to a close. "What a pity that we cannot show them some attention!"

"We might accept some attentions from them," corrected Miss Marsden, briskly, "if they were properly introduced."

"But women have to be so careful about the



associates they choose when travelling," observed Nina, mischievously.

Miss Marsden shook her head. "You will be an apt pupil in the school of old Father Time, my dear; but I am a class ahead of you yet. I think that Englishman is the ugliest man I ever saw."

"So do I," said Nina, demurely.

"He has an honest ring in his voice, certainly; but given the occasion, I dare say he will distinguish himself with the best of them."

"I dare say he drinks," said Nina. "I guess all men drink when they aren't gambling. I expect my husband is as bad as the worst of them—and lie, too. I suppose Captain Eversleigh didn't mean a word of what he said about you."

Miss Marsden, evidently tired of the conversation, was humming five lines to herself:

"A little idle word,  
Breathed in an idle hour;  
Between two laughs that word was said,  
Forgotten just as fled,  
And yet that word had power!"

Immediately afterward she announced her fixed and inalterable decision of going to bed; and Nina, who never wished to retire, and having once retired rarely wished to get up, was obliged to leave her.



The next morning the introductions took place. Captain Fordyce appeared at the breakfast-table, and, some time after Miss Marsden and Nina had seated themselves side by side next him, he leaned over and said to the former in a blunt whisper, "That man wishes an introduction: have you any objection?"

As "that man" meant Captain Eversleigh, who was listening unobtrusively, Miss Marsden murmured an assent; and the introduction was made. Captain Eversleigh then asked Captain Fordyce's permission to seat his friend, Mr. Maybury, in the place left vacant by Mr. Delessert, who was taking his meal no one knew where.

Nina, therefore, had her wish fulfilled. Mr. Maybury was charmed to pour out his store of semi-bashful, semi-bravado remarks at her feet, and she shyly accepted his homage, and allowed her husband to devote himself to his plate.

Breakfast over, they all separated, but, to Nina's amusement, Miss Marsden showed a steady inclination to gravitate toward the music-room; and before the morning was half over, she was striking the opening chords of one of Chopin's waltzes.

Her execution was brilliant enough to be remarkable in one not a professional musician; and Nina



alternately listened to her in pleased surprise, and gazed impatiently at the open door of the room.

There they were at last — their two admirers — looking over each other's shoulders, in hesitating indecision. Little by little, allured by the soulful harmonies, they were drawn into the room; and when Miss Marsden gently swung around on the stool; she found that they had halted about as far from the piano as if it were a caged lion, and were uttering reserved expressions of admiration in respectful tones.

She answered them with distant politeness; but Nina did not open her lips until she thought it necessary to come to her companion's rescue. The young lady had made an extraordinary mistake for a person of her self-command and composure. A piece of music had slipped from the piano to the floor, and as Captain Eversleigh picked it up she remarked, "That song looks as if it would suit your voice."

An inquiring look flitted over his face, and though he did not speak, his manner plainly said, "How in the world do you know that I have a voice?" Blushing like a red, red rose at her blunder, she for a moment lost the faultless repose of manner that he found so charming, and dropping her hands on her lap she nervously surveyed her rings.



Nina glanced at the title of the song, "Do Not Forget Me, Darling." Even from the solitudes of Rubicon Meadows she knew that it was one of the most hackneyed of the drawing-room songs of the day. Probably the naughty lover had sung it to Miss Marsden. Its title recalled him; and to keep herself from crying she had said the first thing that came into her mind.

"I guess you mean that it suits my husband's voice," she lisped, kindly.

Her air of utter guilelessness, coupled with the ridiculous suggestion of their reserved commander singing anything so sentimental as the ditty before them, quite overcame her companions, and they broke into spontaneous and simultaneous laughter.

"I think Captain Fordyce's voice would be more after the order of double bass," said Captain Eversleigh, controlling himself. "This is more suited to my after-mess baritone. Will you be kind enough to try the accompaniment for me?" and placing the music on the rack, he gave Miss Marsden the opportunity of turning away from them her white face with its crimson streaks.

Nina and Mr. Maybury retired to a divan. The piano had broken the ice between them, and for the remainder of the voyage it kept up its kindly offices.



Miss Marsden and Nina found Mr. Maybury to be a cool, careless, undemonstrative youth, with a mercurial style of conversation and unlimited stores of nonsense and absurd chatter at his command.

Captain Eversleigh was more of a man of the world ; although he, too, could be nonsensical when occasion required. However, whatever he might feel, there was not the slightest exhibition of devotion in the efforts he made for the entertainment of the person who pleased him most of the passengers on board the *Merrimac*. Indeed, he was more demonstrative with Mrs. Grayley, when that lady appeared. But she came out very little during the last few days of the voyage. Her favourite, Mr. Delessert, was in disgrace, and was lurking in out-of-the-way nooks of the steamer ; therefore she preferred solitude and the darkened room that kept her hands white.

At last a morning came when the joyful news flew through the ship that they should be in England before evening.

A kind of resurrection ensued. A curious conglomeration of passengers issued from the rooms that had been affording them shelter during the last few days. Numbers of them had never been seen before ; and Nina developed an irresistible ten-



dency to laugh in her sleeve, as they, for the most part, sneaked on deck with the guilty air of having been off on a lengthy spree.

However, their pale, seasick faces brightened as the land breeze swept across the decks; and with vows not loud, but deep, they solemnly bound themselves never again to exchange the delights of *terra firma* for a life on the ocean wave.

Just before lunch Mrs. Grayley came on deck. She languidly sank into a chair beside Nina, and her eyes wandered to Captain Eversleigh, who was sitting in the waist of the ship. When he left his comfortable reclining chair to administer consolation to a child who had fallen down, she said, "That man has a kind heart if he has an ugly face."

Miss Marsden and Nina had indulged in numberless speculations in regard to Captain Eversleigh; for, with characteristic English reserve, he volunteered but little information about himself.

"Do you know him?" asked Nina, quietly.

"I know about him. He stayed with some friends of mine in New York. He is on his way to take possession of some property left him by a distant relative: it will make him quite a rich man."

Miss Marsden, who was sitting beyond Nina, made



no remark ; and the latter again took up the thread of conversation. " Did he get the news while he was in America ? "

" Yes, by cablegram. He is in an English regiment of the line. I dare say he will leave it and devote himself to taking care of his money. "

" He is rather agreeable to talk to, " drawled Nina.

Mrs. Grayley's inane face enlivened itself. " You are not doing the poor fellow justice with your faint praise. My friends whom he visited — the Dunmoor-Marleys, of New York — said that his aunt, old Lady Glenville, who lives in Park Lane, London, actually bows down and worships him. She is a fine old lady, regular English type ; rides horseback like a girl. She brought him up ; his parents are dead. Her husband is an admiral, old Admiral Glenville. I dare say you have heard of him, Miss Marsden, " and she leaned across Nina to look at Nina's silent companion.

" No, I have not, " said that young lady, calmly.

" Well, you will if you go to London and go into society. He is as lively as his wife. "

" Captain Eversleigh will make a good husband for some girl, " said Nina, with a matronly air.

" Indeed he will, " assented Mrs. Grayley.



Nina had not found out what she wished to know, so she asked, point-blank, "Is he engaged?"

"No; the Dunmoor-Marleys said that he nearly breaks poor old Lady Glenville's heart. She invites all the nice girls she knows to her house, hoping he will fall in love with one of them; and he tells her they are all charming, but not half as charming as she is. Now what can you do with a man like that? Many a girl has gone wild over him, plain-looking as he is; but he has never yet taken interest enough in a woman even to hint that he would like to marry her."

Nina threw Miss Marsden a significant glance, and developed such a strong tendency to laugh that the young lady said, hastily: "I should not think that he would be very much sought after if he had only his captain's pay."

"But you don't understand," exclaimed Mrs. Grayley. "The Glenvilles are to leave him their money. He has always been a most eligible *parti*."

Nina got up and sauntered down the deck, and Mrs. Grayley thoughtfully contemplated the sea.

"Do you really think he has a kind heart?" asked Miss Marsden, languidly, "or is he just putting it on?"



“The Dunmoor-Marleys said he was one of the nicest men that ever slept under their roof.”

“How long was he with them?”

“A week; then he was yachting for another week. Jane Dunmoor-Marley says: ‘A man that comes after my daughters can fool me on land, even in my own house; but he can’t on my yacht. Put a man in a cubby-hole, and if he has any bad qualities they will come out.’ So she always takes aspiring suitors to sea. You know they have no end of money?”

“Yes, I know. How did this young man Maybury know Captain Eversleigh?”

“They found they had mutual friends. They didn’t know each other when they came on board. Maybury is half English, anyway. His mother was a Sefton of Suffolk.”

“Was she? He seems to be devoted to his new friend.”

“The Dunmoor-Marleys said Herbert Eversleigh was a regular man’s man. Some of his friends would go through fire and water for him. I guess Jane was sorry she didn’t get him for one of her girls. She has such a string of them.”

“A string of girls—poor woman!” murmured Miss Marsden.



## CHAPTER XIV.

### WHAT ARE YOUR WISHES?

NINA was standing by the chart-room door, knocking daintily to attract the attention of her husband, who sat at his writing-table.

"Oh, you have condescended to come at last," he said, opening the door. "You have managed to tear yourself from your trio of friends to oblige me."

"I am always happy to oblige you with a short interview," she said, suavely; "that is but a small concession."

He checked a smile. She was playing a grand lady and aping Miss Marsden.

"I apologise for disturbing you," and he, too, took on a grand manner; "but an interview was necessary. We shall be at the dock in two hours. Then there will be a general scattering, and I shall be busy. Will you kindly express your wishes with regard to your choice of domicile?"

"Is it of any use for me to express my wishes,"



she said, with the utmost sweetness, "when you have probably already arrived at an inalterable decision?"

"I certainly have an invitation for you, birdie," he said, kindly.

"An invitation?" and her eyebrows went up. "May I ask from whom?"

"From Lady Forrest."

"Lady Forrest!"

"Yes; she would like you to spend a fortnight with her."

He saw that his young wife was secretly pleased, although she said, coolly enough, "That little quiet woman! I have scarcely spoken to her."

"She has been about with you, has she not, while you and your dear friends were having your musicales, and you have been civil to her?"

"Such trifling things: only to get her a seat, or talk to her when she looked lonely."

"The trifling things are the ones that count. It would be a good place for you to visit. They are sound people, though Sir Henry is a bit of a snob."

"Suppose I do not care for this visit, what plan have you in your wisdom arranged for me?"

"If you were a model wife you would not ask for plans."



"May I ask what your idea of a model wife's duty would be just now?"

"A regular story-book wife," he said, banteringly, "hangs around her husband's neck, and exclaims, 'Take me with you! I cannot be parted from you!'"

Nina bridled, sat up a trifle straighter, and said, conventionally, although demurely: "Take into consideration the fact that a model wife has usually a model husband."

"Right you are," he said, idly tearing in pieces an envelope that he took from the table. Presently he looked up. "Have you been quite happy the last few days?"

"Quite happy, thank you."

"You seem to have been having a lively time."

"Very lively; Miss Marsden is charming."

"And Mr. Maybury."

"Mr. Maybury, too," and she gave him a steely glance from the corner of her eye, that made his blood thrill in his veins. She was furious with him, but she was getting over her babyish habit of exploding into wrath on every available occasion. She had missed his devotion. So very warm the first part of the voyage, so very cold the latter. With the sensitiveness of her sex, she had resented the change in



his conduct that had drawn upon her the comment of outsiders. Perhaps the captain was not, after all, so wrapped up in his pretty wife, the passengers would observe; and very likely they had been expressing their pity in some unostentatious way that she would be quick to notice and to resent, and that would make her more wrathful with him.

"Suppose I do not wish to visit the Forrests," she was saying, in a hard voice. "Is there no other place for me?"

"Apart from me, you would say, birdie," he remarked, gently. "Yes, you may board somewhere in Liverpool, or, if I get a chance, I will send you on to London."

"Why could I not go with Miss Marsden?"

"She is going to visit relatives. She would not care to have you tagging after her."

"But I suppose there are hotels in London."

"Yes, a few; but with your recently acquired worldly wisdom it is remarkable that it does not occur to you that, at your age, and with your inexperience, travelling alone would be attended by numberless difficulties. Englishwomen are reserved. You could not strike up friendships here as you could in America."



"I wish I were in America," she said, with sudden heat.

"So do I, birdie. I am sorry I brought you with me."

His calm remark threw her into a sudden confused surprise, to cover which she asked, quickly, "What are you going to do with yourself?"

"I shall stay here for some days, then take a run over to Paris, I think."

"And — and when shall I see you?" she faltered.

"Any time you drop me a line. If I don't get one I will run in and say good-bye the evening before we are off to sea again. That will be about ten days hence."

"But I, — what am I to do?"

"You want to stay in England, don't you?"

"Yes — no — I don't know."

"As you are here, you might as well stay for awhile," he said, good-humouredly. "I will find some middle-aged lady to chaperone you, and you can travel a bit."

"But I don't like this country. I want to go back to America."

"Do you want to go with me?"

She made no response, and he continued, "I can't



let you go with any other person. I think you had better wait over a trip."

"Very well," she said, with a return to composure, "I will visit Lady Forrest. Shall I go and see her now?"

He nodded, then as she rose he said, softly, "Won't you kiss your husband, little girl, before you leave him?"

She flung up her head. Wilfulness, wounded pride, and obstinacy were working within her. She knew now that, although his homage was distasteful to her, she had been disturbed by the discontinuance of it. And he was speaking coolly of leaving her. She did not know whether he was in earnest or not. And she was to write to him if she wished to see him. Did he forget that that was a reversal of the natural order of things? The man should seek the woman, not the woman the man. Well, she could convey a lesson to him on that point.

"When I wish to kiss you, I will come to you," she said, frigidly.

She expected this cut to have the effect of repulsing him, for he was following her to the door, but it did not.

"Do you know, soulless wax doll," he asked, putting his head on one side, and trying to appear



pathetic, "why Lady Forrest presented me with that invitation instead of you?"

"Why, no," replied Nina, coming to an abrupt stop, and looking considerably disturbed. "So she should have asked me. I am married—I never thought—"

"She came upon me a day ago," pursued Captain Fordyce, in the same meaning voice; "you were all singing in the music-room. I was behind the bars outside like an angel cast out of paradise."

"A fallen angel," whispered Nina.

"Fallen or unfallen, I was there. She came on me in her quiet way. She sees more than one thinks for. She was sorry for me because I was—"

"Don't say that word," exclaimed the girl, harshly; "I can't endure it."

"What word, birdie?"

"That hateful word—you do it on purpose. You want to play upon my feelings," she said, passionately; "I will not have it."

"Upon my life," he interposed, with an air of genuine bewilderment, "I don't know what it is."

"It is 'lonely,' and you are not 'lonely,'—you cannot be. There are people all around you. You are always busy. I think you are perfectly hor—horrid to me," and with her air of fine ladyhood all



gone she went stumbling down the steps. She had not changed so much, after all.

A few hours later her voyage across the Atlantic was already a thing of the past. Seated beside Sir Hervey and Lady Forrest, she was being driven swiftly through the streets of Liverpool to their home on the borders of Prince's Park. Sir Hervey was fussing about the exactions of custom-house officers, his wife was patiently listening to him; so Nina had leisure for allowing her mind to run backward and dwell on the occurrences of the last few hours.

It had cost her a severe pang to part from her travelling companions. Perhaps it was on account of Miss Marsden's kindness to her. Some day, though, they were to meet again. Her new friend had assured her of that.

Captain Eversleigh had also taken leave of her with the utmost friendliness; and Mr. Maybury had promised to visit Rubicon Meadows sometime for the fishing. Everybody had been kind but 'Steban, — the hard-hearted 'Steban. Only a brief, "Good-bye, Nina, take care of yourself," and he was gone. He might have been a little tender at the last, especially as there were strangers about, — strangers who were observing and critical. Well, possibly absence



would bring him to his senses, and he would find the happy medium between excessive devotion and cold neglect.

The carriage stopped. They were approaching one of Cowper's "Citizen-delighting, suburban villas — highwayside retreats." The footman descended from his box, sprang to the carriage door, and Nina found herself meekly following Lady Forrest into a house that at first blush seemed to her a dream of grandeur.



## CHAPTER XV.

### WHAT IS LOVE?

A WEEK went by, a week of mingled delight and torture for Nina. She had never, outside novels, participated in entertainments as fine as those to which she was taken. The theatre was a revelation, the shops a long drawn out pleasure, and calls, tea-drinkings, dinner-parties, and drives into the country kept her in an almost continual state of enchanted and suppressed enjoyment. But yet she was not perfectly happy. Her pleasant hours were interspersed with melancholy ones. One day Lady Forrest, casting down her mouse-coloured eyes in her unobtrusive fashion, murmured, "I think I will give a dinner-party the day after to-morrow, my dear. A young man of very distinguished family for whom my husband has been investing money is in the city. Would you like me to invite your husband? It will be quite a small affair."

Nina's heart leaped for joy; but she merely said,



"Thank you, Lady Forrest, I wish you would ask him to come."

Two evenings later she flung open her wardrobe, dismissed the maid Lady Forrest had sent to help her dress, and threw every gown she possessed on the bed. Which should it be? There was a great deal in dress, these Englishwomen told her. A becoming gown had been known to decide the fate of a kingdom. What about that pretty green thing that 'Steban had bought for her in Boston? The lace frills were certainly becoming. She tried it on, then dashed it on a chair. Fie! the trying thing! She looked positively hideous. Well, there was a dove-coloured silk open at the throat. It would be a crime to put on a high-necked dress in this household; though it was a fortunate thing that Mamma Danvers could not see her. She would be shocked to death.

In half an hour she was red in the face, her teeth were worrying her under lip, and she was half-crying from vexation. Nothing suited her, nothing fitted. Everything was trying to her complexion, rasping to her nerves.

The maid knocked at her door, and she irritably called, "Come in."

"I would better assist you, ma'am," the newcomer



observed, civilly ; "dinner will be served in ten minutes. Lady Forrest has long since gone down."

"Put on that," said Nina, desperately, and she indicated a sprigged and washed white muslin frock.

"That, ma'am?" said the woman, in faint surprise.

"Yes," said the girl, choking back a sigh. "It is a Rubicon Meadows frock, — the place I come from. My husband is coming. I think he would like to see me in it."

"Would you just try this, ma'am, first," and the woman laid her hand on a white silk production of an American dressmaker's skill.

"That! it is too plain and it makes me tall and hideous and like a ghost!" exclaimed the girl.

"Will you just try it?" coaxed the woman. "Your colour is rising."

Nina's refractoriness ceased, and she resignedly bent her head. In a trice the woman's deft fingers had fastened the gown in the back, arranged the chiffon, bib-like draperies in front, and straightened out the folds of the soft, clinging skirt.

"Now your slippers, ma'am," and she deftly clasped them on Nina's tiny feet. "And just one look in the mirror," and she turned a watchful eye toward the clock.

"All in white," and Nina slowly twirled before



her cheval-glass. "It is not as bad as I thought it would be."

The woman discreetly held her peace, and began tidying the room. The girl, ordinarily only pretty, was a beauty this evening. Something had animated her, and made her cheeks burn and her eyes glow. Now she was running back. What had she forgotten — her handkerchief? and the maid hastily opened a drawer.

No, not a handkerchief, for she was waving a morsel of lace in her hand. "I want to thank you for helping me dress, Mrs. Morris," she said, graciously.

"Beg pardon, ma'am, but you'll be late if you don't go down," said the woman, who, as a well-trained English domestic, knew better than to allow this youthful American married lady to beguile her into any familiarity with her superiors.

However, she was secretly gratified by the flattering prefix tacked to her usually abbreviated name, and she slipped into the hall to see the young American lady enter the drawing-room.

She was shaking hands in the hall with a rather stout, thick-set man of middle age, — a dark, reserved-looking man who must be her husband. "A wonder he does not kiss her," soliloquised the woman, "since they are alone."



But he did not kiss her, and the girl hurriedly preceded him into the drawing-room, from whence Morris presently saw the company come arm in arm on their way to the dining-room.

Mrs. Fordyce was not with her husband. She was escorted by a barrister well-known to the house. The guest of honour, the honourable Arthur Gravesham, fourth son of the Earl of Greenfell, was in front with Lady Forrest. He was not much to look at, and with a yawn the woman went to her sewing. This was not a grand dinner-party. The gowns were not worth noticing, and as for that black-moustached husband of the girl she had just dressed, he was in an evening suit at least three years old in cut. No gentleman wore lapels of that shape now.

Nina's head was swimming, yet outwardly she was an iceberg. She wondered whether her husband was admiring her. Did he see how quickly and how completely she had acquired the reserved, distinguished air of the Englishwomen about her? How little she spoke, and in what a low, sweet voice. How mincingly she ate, and with what tiny, tiny mouthfuls; and at dessert she would show him that she could quite well cut an apple with a knife and fork, instead of gnawing it with her pearly teeth.



To her chagrin, he was not devouring her with his eyes. Something had happened. Something had come between them since they parted. He was not unkind nor unloving, he was simply absent-minded; and he was fighting against it with all his might; and she keenly watched him as he strove to throw off his burden of thought, whatever it was, and devote himself to the young lady that he had taken in to dinner.

She was an English girl, a neighbour of the Forrests, and Nina had had some previous acquaintance with her.

"'Steban calls me a doll," she indignantly reflected; "the doll is beside him. I know more in ten minutes than that girl does in a year; and she is ten months older than I am. I guess she must have been brought up on pap. He seems to like to hear her talk. He is quite thawing. Yes, indeed, I admire the English climate immensely," and she turned to the barrister who was addressing her. "It keeps one so interested. You never know what is going to happen. It is like the servant question in America. One discusses it all the time."

There were no apples for dessert, and by the time the other fruit provided had reached the table, Nina was in a high state of irritation. She had an addi-



tional cause to bring it on ; for, coupled with her husband's neglect, was his strange indifference to an insult that was being offered him.

She, too, had noticed that his coat was not of the latest cut. Then he was neither a professional man nor a rich man ; and the men surrounding them were either the one or the other, or both, or of aristocratic connection like Mr. Gravesham. With considerable keenness, and great personal displeasure, she had been ferreting into the question of class distinctions, hitherto an unknown subject to her. She hated the system. One person was as good as another in her estimation ; and this talk of law, medicine, the army, and the church, as being the only walks in life for gentlemen, made her sick. Certainly these cold-hearted patricians about the table regarded her husband as lower in rank than themselves. They also had a well-bred way of observing her that she did not like. And her husband did not resent his supposed inferiority. It made her blood boil that he should be so meek. She wished that he would dash his napkin on the table, and rush from the house. And now some one was actually calling him by his last name. This was too much for flesh and blood to bear, and her bright eyes and sharp ears immediately



went to locate the clear-spoken and oft-recurring "Fordyce!"

It was that odious son of an earl. He had engaged her husband in a discussion of some points connected with yachting. Well, she would give him a lesson; and she immediately lost her superb manner and became lively and animated.

Her neighbours regarded her with indulgence. She was an American girl, far more variable and vivacious than an English one. Far more entertaining, the young barrister confided to his inmost soul. If this dainty, laughing creature were not married, he himself might be tempted to try his luck. Might he—he would do nothing precipitately. But hold—what was the dainty creature saying?

She was addressing the Honourable Arthur Gravesham, actually addressing him across the table in a most familiar and disrespectful manner; and he held his breath to hear.

Nina's exasperation had reached its last stage. She did not know that Mr. Gravesham had a fixed habit of mentioning the names of persons with whom he conversed; and that his satisfaction at finding her husband's views with regard to the size and build of yachts entirely coincided with his own was exhibiting itself in a more and more frequent use of his name.



Nina's watchful eye never left him, and during one of the dignified pauses of his conversation she fixed him with a deceitfully gentle and supplicating stare, and said, distinctly, "Gravesham, please pass me the preserved ginger."

The young barrister was not the only one whose attention turned in dismay upon her. Sir Hervey opened and shut his mouth like an overheated fish, and as for the Honourable Arthur Gravesham, he settled his glasses more firmly on the bridge of his aristocratic nose, and said, feebly, "I beg your pardon."

"I said, Gravesham, please pass the preserved ginger," she repeated, in a distinct voice, and allowing a mild and inquiring gaze to wander around the table as if to ask why all these people had suddenly become interested in her.

Only Lady Forrest was smiling her quiet smile as she watched her. Sir Hervey had become cool enough to gasp, in an explanatory way, "Hem — hem — Mrs. Fordyce, American — not used to our customs."

Nina immediately addressed him, "Have I said anything wrong, Forrest?"

He grew redder and more inclined to choke and splutter. What a fortunate thing that the servants



had left the room. "You forget the handles to our names, that is all. It is 'Mr. Gravesham' and 'Sir Hervey,' not 'Gravesham' and 'Forrest.'"

"Oh, thank you," said Nina, with infantine grace. "I heard Mr. Gravesham calling my husband by his last name, and I thought it was the custom here. It is not American, I assure you. We call everybody at home 'Mr.'—even the butcher. I am sure I apologise to you both. I will not offend again, *Mr.* Gravesham and *Sir* Hervey!" and with a slight and most becoming confusion she quietly continued her dinner.

Mr. Gravesham was sulky and would talk no more, and Sir Hervey was discomposed and a little trifle discontented with his usual favourite; but no one else took the occurrence to heart. Lady Forrest was talking amiably and obliviously to her neighbours, and at last Captain Fordyce's attention was concentrated on the bowed head of his young wife. She had effectually roused him from his abstraction,—the dear little rude, jealous thing. After dinner he would have a settlement with her, and in his old satisfaction he threw his burden of black care from him, and followed her with his eyes as she left the room with the other ladies.

Where was she? He was one of the first men to



leave the dining-room, but she was neither in the drawing-room nor in the conservatory. "I think I saw her going into the garden," murmured Lady Forrest. "You will find a wrap in the hall. You would do well to take it to her."

Captain Fordyce strolled out into the garden. It was not a large one, and she was certainly not in it. He walked to and fro. Then placing himself in full view of the drawing-room windows so that she could come to him if she chose to do so, he sat down on a seat and with a weary "Heigh ho!" took out a cigar.

"Heigh ho, here we go, over the sea to the land of the free," echoed a bantering voice above him.

He looked up. There among the spreading branches of a resplendent copper beech overhead was his wife. She was at her old trick of climbing trees. And in that hundred dollar gown, and his mind lately drawn to pecuniary matters again grew burdened.

However, it would not do to let her see his anxiety, so he said, quietly: "Why did you go up there, Nina?"

"Because I was afraid you would scold me," she said, with mock solemnity.



"What about?"

"About chivying the noble son of an earl."

"You were not polite."

"Then let him give you your proper title," she said, hotly. "He doesn't like to be called by his last name."

"They don't mean anything by it here," said her husband, wearily. "Different countries, different customs. Whenever I carry grandees on the *Merrimac* they call me by my surname."

"They won't do it when I am about," she said, with decision. "You are as good as anybody. What is the matter with you this evening?"

"Nothing," he said, with assumed animation.

"Yes, there is. You've had bad news of some kind."

"Did I show it?" he asked, with chagrin.

"Oh, no, not very much, but I knew."

His face softened. "It's nothing, Nina."

"You've fallen in love with some other woman."

"Good heavens, no — yes, I mean, I have."

"You've lost some money."

He lighted his cigar, began smoking it, and not until teased and worried by questions rained on him from above did he ejaculate, "Suppose I have. There's my salary."



"How much did you lose?"

"Come down from that tree, Nina. Somebody might come out from the house and you would be remarked."

"This is a very nice country," she returned, cheerfully and irrelevantly.

"I am glad you like it."

"That is a fine house," she said, waving her hand toward the stone erection beyond them. "It is a pleasant thing to have a butler and footmen and plenty of maids."

He grunted something inaudible, and stared up pityingly at the white cloud among the glowing leaves above him.

"And to know how to pour out tea so nicely and properly, and talk about the theatres and the royal family, and the news from the Continent, and our American cousins, and never do anything wrong or think anything improper, and be admired and sought after, and love everybody and have everybody love you."

He smoked on in grim silence, until she asked, tenderly, "Captain Fordyce, can you ever build me a house like that?"

"Oh, yes," he said, derisively.

"Can you give me a carriage lined with gray



cushions, with a clock in it, and a hand-glass, and cunning little footstools?"

He would not answer her.

"And a palace in a park like the Earl of Somebody or Other's over across the river?" and she waved her hand toward the Mersey.

"And heaps of fine gowns," she continued, "silks, and satins, and velvets trimmed with pearls and diamonds and rubies? And I want to be presented at Court and have a house in London."

"You are modest in your wishes," he said, between his closed teeth.

She laid her cheek against the tree trunk, and whispered, "How much money did you lose, 'Steban?"

"I lost a trifle that I had laid up for old age."

"Whose old age?"

"Yours."

"What about your own?"

"I shall not have any. All our family die young."

She raised her head to the sky, but could not see it for the thick green thatch above her. "'Steban," she said, in silvery tones, "men aren't like women, are they?"

"Not much."

"If I were a woman in love and had lost money, I would still think of the man I was fond of; but when



you think of your business, I fly right out of your mind."

"Women would be a heap better off if they didn't stew so much over their love affairs."

She was dropping purplish brown leaves on him one by one. When a large-sized one took the ashes off the end of his cigar, she laughed gaily, and in a heart-whole fashion, and said, "'Steban, I believe you've lost every cent of money you've saved."

"No, I haven't," he growled.

"How much have you left?"

"It's that confounded McGray in New York," he said, in abrupt and deep-seated resentment. "He's absconded. I trusted him — thought he was a sure thing on investments. I can't watch the markets from the Atlantic. There will be a lot of our line out by him."

"Poor captains!" murmured Nina. Then bending low down on her branch, she said, pleadingly:

"'Steban, tell me all about it."

"You would not understand. I have said all I am going to say."

She straightened herself suddenly, and exclaimed, with a martyr-like air, "I have done nothing, yet I must suffer!"

He smoked on, sulking over his losses, yet con-



soled slightly by the presence of his wood-nymph in the tree overhead. Now she was leaning down again, hanging on by her hands and feet like a monkey, and dropping her light head to within a short distance of him. And what was she whispering with such delicate softness and grace? Something more about the money, and he threw away the stump of his cigar and ejaculated a prosaic "Hey?"

"'Steban," she whispered again, "what is love?"

He was not in a condition of mind to expatiate on the beauties of the ardent attraction of one human being for another. Recognising this, she went on, in the same low voice: "You're nothing but a plain, every-day, commonplace sort of man. There's no poetry in your nature, never was, and never will be. *I will tell you what love is;*" and moving farther out on the limb that she had chosen for her resting-place, she lightly jogged up and down, and began a joyful monologue.

"This is love. You are a girl not very old, not very young. You fall in love with a man. Some one else wants to marry you—a good many other persons want to marry you. You look at this one; you say, 'No, my dear sir, you won't do. You must have long arms and a short temper, and a bronze



face and black eyes like shoe buttons. That light hair and that curly moustache won't do ; and to make you perfect, you must have a tiny, a very tiny, bald spot in the middle of your head. And you must be hateful and snappish sometimes, not always sweet and pleasant, because then I would get tired of you. And you must be poor and have to work hard just like a dog, because that will keep you out of mischief. And you musn't live in a grand house. No, no, sir, you are too rich. I could never take care of all that grand furniture. House-cleaning would quite upset me ; and I hate fine clothes and white kid gloves. It would frighten me to own all those things ; and I just detest sitting up straight and keeping my lips pursed up in a smile. I would rather have meadows, nice big meadows to run over, or the deck of a ship—' 'Steban, what are you doing?' and she ceased her singsong revelation and her swinging at the same time, and glared down at him.

"I am coming up," he said, casting an apprehensive glance at the house as he balanced himself on the back of the seat. "I suppose I am a fool for it, but you are a regular, ~~a~~ possessed little magnet."

"Have you forgotten about your money?" she asked, exhibiting two rows of gleeful white teeth.



“Confound the money,” he responded, stoutly.

She laughed long and delightedly, but in the midst of her amusement deliberately kept ascending higher and higher, never allowing her laughter to prevent her from searching out sure places for her feet.

Her husband kept his eye on her, yet did not caution her. She was as sure-footed as one of his sailor lads. Now she was singing to him :

“‘ Husband, husband, cease your strife,  
Nor longer idly rave, sir ;  
Though I am your wedded wife,  
Yet I am not your slave, sir.’

“Go on !” she exclaimed, when she had finished.

“I can’t,” he said, shortly. “Nina, stop there. I won’t have you climb farther.”

“Men in books always know the next verse,” she said, unheedingly :

“‘ One of two must still obey,  
Nancy, Nancy ;  
Is it man or woman, say,  
My spouse Nancy?’

“It’s man, always man,” she tittered. “When I was married I didn’t say, love, honour, and obey. I said love, honour, and sway — and, ‘Steban, you



must be swayed. Stay where you are," and she tossed off a white kid slipper that, to her delight, struck him on the shoulder before it went leaping down to the grass.

"Nina," he said, commandingly, "did you mean all that just now; or is it only your condemned nonsense?"

She ran her arm around a branch, and waggishly put her two hands up to her mouth after the manner of a speaking-trumpet. "Officer of the watch, — go ask that damsel if she loves me. If so, well, always well. If not, cast her in the hold and let her in irons repent her folly."

"You do love me," he muttered. "You shall go home with me to-night. You have come to your senses at last."

"The man I love has golden hair," she chanted from the tree-top; "if you meet him anywhere, tell him I send a loving kiss, a hearty, hearty prayer that he will come and see me soon, and with me tread the heavenly mead of love's sweet visions fair. A sailor dark, with purpose fell, does strive to tear me from my love, my buxom love with golden hair."

Captain Fordyce cautiously took a step up, uttering an expletive under his breath, as he heard a warning rip in the region of his knee.



“ ‘You’ll rend your attire  
If you come higher !’ ”

sang the girl, saucily.

“ ‘ Better go back,  
There’s a tailor on your track,  
And you haven’t got a cent to pay him with,’ ”

she continued. Then she put her head on one side and watched him. ‘Steban’s troubles were over. He had seated himself crosswise on one of the stout arms of the tree, and was giving himself up to a beatific survey of the white silk foot above him. Then he waxed sentimental. “Nina,” he said, delightedly, “you have found out that you love me — you love me.”

“There are courts in the temple of love,” she said, with sudden gravity. “I have only entered the outermost one.”

“Did you make that up?” he asked, rapturously. “Is it original?”

“What does it matter whether it grew in my mind or another person’s?”

“Darling!” he ejaculated, foolishly; and he tried to seize the slipperless foot dangling within a yard of him.

Seemingly within his reach, it was immediately withdrawn.



He sat for a few minutes in ecstatic silence ; then he began to beg her to descend. For fully ten minutes he lavished on her flattery, endearing words, and offers of gifts, dear to feminine hearts, that he would bestow on her in return for the very smallest, fleetest, most evanescent thing in the shape of a caress.

She stared unheedingly up at the sky, and when he brought his eloquent words to a close, she said, "I see a boat in the moon. It is waiting for a bad sailor who has broken his word for the first time in his life."

Captain Fordyce hastily pulled out his watch and a match-case. Yes, his boat was at the landing-stage waiting to take him to the *Merrimac*.

"I must go," he said, hurriedly. "When shall I come for you, Nina?"

"The man in the moon says haste is folly, delay is wisdom, and to take a leap in the dark is a sure landing in the midst of difficulties."

"There will be plenty of light, Nina," he pleaded. "Come, now, say good night to Lady Forrest and come home with me."

"No, thank you, Mr. Lantern," she replied, decidedly.

"It's confoundedly lonely on the *Merrimac*," he



went on. "I miss my little girl till I am half-dead for the sight of her. I am lonely, lonely—" and he dwelt on the word that he thought had power to afflict her.

"Lonely," she repeated, with a shiver of delight, "most beautiful word in the American language, for it implies future consolation. Put your cheek against the tree trunk."

He obeyed her, trying at the same time to roll his eyes upward. The experiment was not a success, and she exclaimed, "Look at me, you foolish man. It will slip down to you."

She was kissing the trunk in tender intoxication. "Give him this if you meet him, my love with golden hair. Tell him I will come to him when I get my diamond slippers and my chariot of silver. But they have to be made to order, and they are not ready yet — 'Steban, I don't want to be impolite, but you had really better be getting home."

He gave her one last, long, lingering look and slipped down the trunk.

"Good-bye — till I see you again — farewell — adieu," she called after him, "*au revoir*, heaven bless you — *auf wiedersehen*;" but he strode away without a backward glance.



## CHAPTER XVI.

### PERNICIOUS WORDS IMPREGNED WITH REASON.

WHO that has visited has not suffered from the overattentiveness of too kind hosts?

The Forrests were so exceedingly good, so exceedingly devoted, so exceedingly painstaking, that Nina sometimes fled to the shelter of her own room and longed for anything — even some startling occurrence — to deliver her out of their hands. But she would not sound the note of her own deliverance: so for a few days longer she rambled about the proper, stiff garden that, however, had not had all beauty expressed out of it; helped Lady Forrest entertain her callers; went for drives with her or for long aimless walks with a servant always at her heels.

This latter proceeding she protested warmly against, but found herself running her head into a ukase of her husband. He had specially requested that she should never be permitted to go out unaccompanied, and perforce she must endure the society of Lady



Forrest's abigail, although she was longing for solitude, and the companionship only of her own new and exacting thoughts.

This evening, however, she was alone. Sir Hervey and Lady Forrest, after earnest protestations on her part that she should not suffer from loneliness during their absence, had been persuaded to go to the theatre; and, deeply thankful for the uninterrupted enjoyment of her own society, Nina sat drinking her after-dinner coffee in the drawing-room.

It was a sultry evening. The scent of the flowers coming in through the open window was almost putting her to sleep. Under drowsy eyelids she watched the curtain swaying gently in the breeze when a sudden step outside made her straighten herself.

"The postman!" she ejaculated, "bless him — he has saved me from going to sleep."

But it was not the postman. There was a pause, then the footsteps came nearer the window, and she saw standing between the curtains an uninteresting-looking man whom she barely noticed until compelled to do so by his fixed scrutiny of her.

Then she examined him. He was neither tall nor short. He had a quiet, tired face, a slight sneer and sloping shoulders, — becoming in a woman, but



an evidence of weak-mindedness in a man. He was evidently interested in her in spite of his bored manner. She was not flattered, however, and said, coolly : "You will find a footman at the hall door."

"I beg your pardon," he said, in a full, smooth tone and removing his hat, "but it is you I wish to see."

"Oh, indeed!" she said, in surprise; then she asked, hesitatingly, "Will you come in?"

He murmured, "I thank you," entered the room, grasped a chair, and in an absent-minded way drew it nearer her, and sat down, without having once interrupted his scrutiny of her face.

Finally he muttered to himself in quiet satisfaction : "She will do — might even create a sensation."

The beginning of his scrutiny found Nina a happy, contented, though slightly embarrassed young person; the end of it left her a creature panic-stricken and consumed with apprehensive fear.

The man before her was mad. Only that morning Lady Forrest had been telling her that in the very next house lived a rich, middle-aged merchant whose reason was affected, but so slightly that it was not considered necessary to put him under restraint. Now he had escaped from the surveillance of his relatives, and had come to torment her, and in all



the wide earth he could not have found a person with a more strongly rooted, morbid aversion to mad people than she had.

Her head seemed bursting with her intensity of thought. What should she do to rid herself of him? She dared not ring the bell and ask a servant to show him out. It was dangerous to cross the whims of a madman; and, with a shudder, she pictured a sudden lapse into anger on his part, and the breaking of Lady Forrest's gilt furniture.

Well, some unexpected way of deliverance might open. In the meantime, she must force herself into composure, and try to keep him in good humour.

Fortunate for her was it that he appeared a cheerful madman. One of the gloomy, raving kind would send her into hysterics.

"You seem frightened," he said, in dulcet tones; "but you will be quite free from fear when I tell you who I am."

His manner was inviting. He wanted her to urge him on in proclaiming his identity, and, although she had no burning curiosity on the subject, she thought it politic to murmur, faintly, "And who are you?"

"Don't scream nor cry out," he said, putting up



one hand by way of caution ; then leaning forward, and in an assumed and melodramatic voice, he uttered the words, "I am your father."

Oh ! her father only. She was prepared to hear the Shah of Persia or the Emperor of Japan. So his warning was unnecessary. All that she could do now in the way of making a noise would be to emit a faint, a very faint, squeak ; but she was forgetting his peculiar affliction, and, summoning all her forces, she tried to bring a look of astonishment to her blank face.

Her effort was evidently crowned with success, for with a flattered air he went on : "Yes, you were stolen from me when you were a baby. Where has Fordyce been hiding you all these years ?"

The mention of her husband's name threw Nina into a state of mingled resentment, terror, and anger. Could it be that she had made a mistake, — that this man was not mad ? Could it be that the man in America was a usurper, — the lonely man reading his paper and thinking of her ? No, there was her real father, she could never love another ; and mad or not mad, she would not encourage this man. She hated his quiet, weary manner, his cynical tones. He was no relative of hers. She would not have him. She loved the man in America.



"Where has he been hiding you?" he repeated, patiently.

"He has been hiding me in New York," she replied, firmly, and with flashing eyes.

"In New York?" he said, politely; "you have not the air of a city girl."

"I have been in New York," she replied, stubbornly.

"What part of it?"

She had never been in the metropolis of the Empire State in her life, but she possessed a song celebrating the charms of a certain portion of it, and she answered, unhesitatingly, "The Bowery."

Her would-be relative was no better informed than herself. He was a genuine cockney; so he asked another question, this one accompanied by his stealthy and habitual sneer: "I suppose you have been told nothing about me?"

"Yes, ever so many things," she answered, unblushingly.

He looked doubtful, and asked, slowly: "Who has brought you up?"

"Some people called Jones," said Nina, glibly.

"What station in life did they occupy?"

"Mr. Jones ran milk wagons."

"Milk wagons?"



"Perhaps you would call them carts. Things with cans and bottles of milk in them, you know. We were not right in the city. The Bowery is a lovely green place with plenty of trees and a meadow. Our home was on it."

"Oh, a place in the suburbs?"

"Yes, sir."

"What did Captain Fordyce tell you about me?"

"He didn't tell me anything. The Joneses said your business kept you in England, but I should see you some day."

"Did any report of my death reach you?"

"No, sir."

"And yet I sent one," he said. "It was a father's stratagem to bring his child within reach."

His dreamy, affectionate tone did not impose on the sharp-eyed young lady opposite. This man was playing a lazy, sentimental part, and, father or no father, she would not encourage him. She did not like those down-drooping eyes. That was the way she looked herself when she wished to deceive some one.

"You seem to have plenty of spirit," he said, admiringly.

"You must have spirit in New York," she said, emphatically; "otherwise you get imposed on."



The man's admiration increased. She was fooling him — this saucy young daughter of his ; but he liked to be fooled by her, and with an ingratiating air he drew a handful of official-looking documents from his pocket.

"I would like to have you look over these. Then you will be convinced of your relationship to me."

To hide her angry tears, Nina mechanically stretched out her hand, and without understanding a line ran them over. Just a few words from a certificate of birth shone through the glancing mirrors in her eyes, "Bertha Anne Stenner."

"That is not my name," she uttered, in a choked voice.

"What name did Fordyce give you?" asked the man, curiously.

She threw up her head. "Jane Mary Jenkins."

"It was Jones just now," he remarked, with quiet amusement.

"Jones first, the Jenkins afterward," she stammered. "I didn't live with the same people all the time."

"I have been interested in hearing of you from a friend who made the trip with you," he said, mildly.

"Mr. Delessert!" she exclaimed.

"No, not Mr. Delessert."



It *was* Mr. Delessert, and she grew pale and sick and faint, and the words, "A companion to gamblers," ran stupidly through her mind. She did not like this man with his stealthy air of measuring her and summing up her airs and graces. She felt humiliated and ashamed. Mr. Danvers never treated her in that way. She had never seen him look as this man looked, except upon the occasions when he had a fine pink and white young pig to sell, and was running his eye over it in anticipation of the market; and she flushed and quivered all over, as if she, too, were an unfortunate animal with a butcher's knife suspended over her. But she must drive away these shocking thoughts and listen, for her companion was again addressing her.

"I suppose it would be asking too much of you to accompany me to London to-night?"

"I should rather think so," she said, indignantly, "and how do I know that you are not a fraud?"

His indulgent air, and the manner in which he waved his hand toward the papers on her lap, might have convinced her that he was her parent; but she would not be convinced.

"Then I shall wait and see Lady Forrest," he said, calmly. "She will comprehend the justice of my claim."



Nina grew hot all over, and began to measure him from Lady Forrest's standpoint. He was not quite a gentleman, in spite of his quiet manner. His black suit was also a trifle shabby. He must be poor, — this would-be father of hers; and she writhed in inward mortification. Lady Forrest would probably ask him to stay all night. She would break down and cry if this were done. Oh, if 'Steban were only here!

This man must be got out of the house. This was the result of her hurried meditations. Possibly the Forrests would not countenance him. If they were hateful to him, it would kill her, for — for — just suppose he was her father. In snubbing him they would snub her. Blood was thicker than water. She might shrink from this man herself, yet it would make her angry to have him chagrined, and mortified, and turned away from the house.

What was he saying? She wished he would hold his peace for a little while at least, and she unwillingly bent a listening ear. Had she any accomplishments? Could she play or sing?

She bowed reluctantly, swallowed a lump in her throat, and moved toward the piano that the stranger was politely opening.

He handed her a set of popular waltzes, and with-



out a word she began to play. Her angry fingers flew over the keys. She was not an accomplished musician; but she could rattle off a composition of this order with a dash and brilliance that evoked a hearty "Well done!" from her undemonstrative companion.

"And now will you sing?" and Nina flinched as he handed her — of all songs — the hackneyed but touching "Nancy Lee."

In a weak, trembling voice, that seemed to come from a far-away corner of the room, she warbled the strains of the familiar song until she came to the words, "The sailor's wife the sailor's star shall be!"

There, an association of ideas made her drop her head and have recourse to her handkerchief. Poor 'Steban! What a flighty, unsteady kind of a star she was to him. If she were a proper, steady one, she would at this moment be shedding her rays on him, instead of being involved in these clouds of doubt and despair.

She received but faint sympathy in her distress. "As nervous as a cat, and not half as much voice," said the man, disappointedly, to himself; then he strolled away to the other end of the room.

Nina had utterly broken down. As she sat dismally weeping, the fresh night air struck her hot



face. She raised her head. A wind had sprung up. The window curtains were swelling out now like — like the sails of the *Merrimac*. Oh! if she could with one bound spring to the deck of that dear old ship, the black, safe river flowing between her and her perplexities, a strong arm ready to protect her, a strong brain willing to advise her.

Her thoughts led to practical results. This strange man had evinced a persistent desire that she should not leave the room until the arrival of her host and hostess. And they would not appear for an hour or two. A voice seemed ringing in her ears: "Run away from him. It is the easiest way out of the difficulty both for you and for him." And he could never overtake her, — this man with the puffy, white face and sloping shoulders. He looked as if the greater part of his life had been spent indoors, and she had been brought up in the meadows, where she had learned to run like the small, wild creatures hidden there.

A fair start was all she asked for, yet it would be as well to have him handicapped, and she glanced over her shoulder. He was in a distant alcove now, examining the contents of a cabinet, and — let her rejoice, therefore — he was sitting down; and a whole drawer full of coins reposed on his knees.



She would make a wild dash for liberty, but first she must deceive him, and, rising languidly, she drawled, "I will walk outside a minute. I am stifled here."

He looked up, hastily and suspiciously, but her movements were deliberation itself, as she stepped through the open French window and out on the gravel walk.

"I will accompany you," he ejaculated, but by the time he reached the window she had disappeared.

He would never catch up to her now, not if he ran till doomsday; and she shut her ears to the parental cry to tarry, and tore up the avenue until everything, like herself, seemed to be on the wing, and running for dear life. The trees rushed by her with a velocity as pronounced as if some one had broken them off from their roots and set them spinning gaily through space for all time to come. The flower beds were galloping hotly after the trees. The tall, white lily buds, asleep in the twilight a minute ago, were now wide-awake, and tremulous, nodding tops proclaimed their perturbation of spirit, lest they should come to harm in this distracted race. And two little fat, white bodies of statues gleamed out of the darkness, — Cupids, hugging their bows and quivers. An instant, and they had



vanished, followed by Juno, stately Juno, her sceptre tucked under her arm, her long garments floating out behind her as she swept by in a neck and neck race with the short-skirted goddess of hunting.

The gates at last — and Nina thoughtfully flung them open for her pursuer. He would never catch her now, never, never.



## CHAPTER XVII.

“MUCH HAVE I BORNE SINCE DAWN OF MORN.”

To sit in a tender with her feet on a bag of coal had never up to this been Nina's idea of paradise. But now she changed her mind in the speediest manner possible.

She was in a small puffing craft of sable blackness; her light gown was in damaging proximity to the lumps of coal, yet she was blissfully happy. For she was gliding swiftly and surely over the broad, black bosom of the river toward the bright white light hung up in the masts of the *Merrimac*.

A few minutes, and she was in the shadow of the huge bulk. Then her hands and feet nimbly laid hold on the wooden steps, and some one was helping her to clamber to the deck.

She looked up and saw the quartermaster. She gave him a gay “Good evening,” that he was too startled to return; then, mentioning her name, she requested him to pay and dismiss the men on the tender.



She sauntered along the deck to the chart-room. Opening the door, she found it empty. "Ah! I thought he would be here," she murmured; "but no matter — he must be somewhere. It is late, perhaps he is having supper."

There was a book on navigation lying open on the table, and she turned over a few pages. What queer language — how clever he must be to understand it! "Man the spanker brails and weather vang and sheet; hands by the outhaul, brace in the cross-jack yards, ease away the outhaul. Brail up, hauling in the lee brails best, so as to spill the sail as quickly as possible, then haul up the weather brails, pass the foot gaskets, steady the gaff, crutch the boom, and stow the sail."

She smiled wearily, closed the book, and descended to the deck. What a glorious night it was! There was no moon, but there were stars, legions of them, flashing down on the lesser lights of earth. It was getting late, yet there was still a murmur of traffic in the two great towns stretched out on either side of them, although out here on the river it was very quiet.

A puff of smoke in her face drew her attention to the tender. It was just putting off, and she watched it for a few minutes. Swiftly, unerringly,



the little black craft glided between the shipping, avoiding alike the leviathans of the deep and the tiniest cockle-shells afloat. Then its light was lost among the other myriad lights, and she turned away, and dived down the first opening she came to.

How quiet the ship was! Only a few sailors in the distance who stared at her as if she had been a ghost. She almost lost herself in a strange alley-way that brought her to the now silent engine-room. Emerging from it, she got into a passage running half the length of the ship, and that she knew would lead her to the dining-saloon.

Just as her hand was on the door, a roar of laughter saluted her ears. She opened it a very little and peered cautiously in.

The ship's officers were seated at an end of one of the long dining-tables, having their supper and an uncommonly good joke, she should imagine, judging by their faces. Their knives and forks were laid down, and they were laughing, not like landsmen, but like sailors with strong and hearty lungs. Loud, explosive guffaws testified to the richness of the joke, and Nina wondered what it was. And 'Steban was as bad as the rest of them, lying back in his chair, his hands on his sides. She never had seen him laugh in that way before.



"Poor fellow!" she breathed, "I am glad he knows how to enjoy himself. Far better this than to find him alone sighing for something he cannot get."

Then she frowned. Would those men ever stop laughing? Such continued frivolity was childish and unbecoming in grown men. Now if they were boys —

"Come now!—none of that, Miss Petticoats," ejaculated some one behind her. "The captain don't allow lady folks about the ship."

Nina turned and saw Merdyce. Merdyce, so very subservient in the presence of his master, so very important when in the presence of his equals. She drew her wrap closer about her and vouchsafed no answer.

"Move out of that, please," he exclaimed, with a flourish of his arm. "I want to pass."

He was carrying a solitary bottle. Nina stood back, and he dashed by with a farewell injunction to her to take herself off.

As he entered the saloon, Nina thrust her head after him. The peals of laughter had died away, and Captain Fordyce was his usual reserved self. He was never familiar for any length of time with his subordinates. Just now, though no one ad-



dressed him, he perceived by the faces about him that there was some special attraction at the door, and he, too, glanced in that direction.

The intruding head had been withdrawn, so he turned to Merdyce. "Is there any one out there?"

"Yes, sir, a young person," the officious youth explained; "she's hanging about the ship."

Captain Fordyce's brows contracted. "And she's been spying at you, sir, through the door."

At this there was a general pricking up of ears, and a faint glimmer of a smile illumined all faces but Captain Fordyce's.

"Send her away," he said, shortly.

Merdyce swung open the door, but Nina was an adept at dodging, and, by no means averse to playing a trick, glided by him and brought herself to a standstill some distance from the table. Between the dirty fringes dangling over her forehead, she contemplated herself in the mirror set in the wall behind her husband's back.

What a guy she was, — enveloped from head to foot in a soiled linen carriage wrap. And yet the garment was a costly one, for not until she had placed three sovereigns in the hand of the cab-driver who conveyed her to the dock was she allowed to become possessor of it. He knew — the grasp-



ing fellow — that she could not go out on the river in an evening dress.

If she were in her usual spirits, and possessed of her usual propensity for seeking amusement at unlawful times and from unlawful sources, she would be in a convulsion of delight at the scene before her. Her husband could not see her face, nor her figure; and, thanks to the wrap, she could carry on an uninterrupted scrutiny of him.

He did not know her — how delicious! He sat back, joining in the universal stare (for the men had all stopped eating, and those who had had their backs toward her had twisted around on their seats), unutterably disgusted with the young person who had presumed to “spy” at him.

His keen eyes could not pierce the coarse, soiled fabric that enwrapped her, yet she saw he had fully made up his mind that inside it was not a lady, but a creature entirely vulgar and depraved.

He asked a leading question. “Who are you?”

She drew the fringes of the wrap across her mouth, and said, almost unintelligibly, “A poor girl!”

“What do you want?”

“Some money to buy bread,” she uttered, thickly, but with appealing sweetness.



"Bread!" and he snorted like a righteously indignant war-horse.

"I am a poor orphan," continued Nina, "and I have six little brothers and four little sisters in bed for want of clothes. Can't you give me something?"

"Be off!" and he contemptuously turned to his plate.

"Please come with me, good sir," she murmured, in her plaintive beggar's whine, and she stretched out a pleading hand.

At the same time there was apparent in her manner, even under the linen shroudings, a sauciness and assurance that claimed further attention from the master of ceremonies.

He threw up his head at this imp-like creature who was teasing him, and gave a backward nod toward the watchful Merdyce. There was a visible tendency on the part of his officers to laugh. It was time the place was cleared.

Merdyce thought that his hand was just about to alight on the stranger's shoulder; but he was mistaken, for she had slipped aside, and was shaking a jingling wrist toward his master. There was nothing on it but a bangle, a brass one, probably; but it was evidently some token, for the man at the



table recognised it at once, and, without a glance at the ridiculously bewildered faces of his fellows, sprang to his feet, and, throwing an arm around her, swept her from the room.

Merdyce stood with his mouth open, and as the door swung together Nina heard the first murmur of a sound that she knew would develop into an immoderate burst of laughter, rivalling, if not eclipsing their former effort in that line.

“Don’t mind them, darling, they have not an idea who you are,” whispered her husband, joyously, in her ear.

Then he opened the door of one of the small rooms along the passage. This had been Miss Marsden’s apartment. The last time Nina was in it picturesque confusion reigned triumphant from ceiling to floor. Dresses, shoes, rugs, books, bottles, hats, and cloaks lay cheek by jowl; and Miss Marsden herself, large-eyed and cheerful, reclined in the midst. Now they could see the pattern of the carpet. The whole room was as neat as wax, and the berth wherein Miss Marsden was wont to lounge was made up as neatly as if never again intended for the use of mortal man or woman.

The curtains of the berth were drawn up from the floor, and folded neatly over the white pillow. “It



looks as if some one had died here," she said, with a nervous shudder; "come away, 'Steben, we can talk in some other place."

"You look done out," he said, in an explanatory way. "I thought you would like to get into the first place available."

"No," she said, clinging to his hand, and drawing him down the passage and toward the companionway. "I feel better now. In such close proximity to your fists, I could look the whole world in the face, — I am afraid of nobody, no, not I."

He did not speak, but his face was flushed and full of a curious expectancy, and he was gnawing his moustache in an occasional restless fashion that he had.

Nina exhibited not the slightest desire to gratify his curiosity. They were on deck now, and she stopped before a door bearing the inscription, "Captain's Room," on a brass plate.

"May I go in?" she asked.

"Certainly," and he followed her.

It was the most cheerful apartment on the ship. The walls were panelled with some dark, shining wood; the furniture, though all of the heavy order, was handsome and elaborate. There were books and papers, but only one picture. It hung in a recess



over the bed, and Nina went up and examined it. She knew that her husband possessed a picture taken of her in her childish days, but was far from guessing that it hung here.

"You always let this room to the highest bidder, don't you?" she asked, as she seated herself in a large American rocking-chair.

"Not exactly," he replied, "but I usually give it up."

"And the money you get from it falls to you?"

"Yes, — perquisites," he said, lightly.

"For me," she went on, twisting around the gold bangle on her wrist, "you go about the ocean sleeping on a shelf —"

"Or in a hammock," he interrupted, with a smile.

"In order that I may be clothed in fine raiment."

"I don't know about the fineness of it," he said, critically surveying the coarse wrap still hanging about her shoulders.

She threw it far from her; then, pointing to the photograph behind her, said: "Do you always leave it there?"

"No; when a stranger takes possession I move it."

"So you remember me when I was like that?"



she said, getting up, and gazing again at the round-cheeked, diminutive baby head staring at her from the wall.

"Yes."

"An ugly child, that," she said, "two great eyes sunk in fat cheeks."

"Yes, you were not very handsome —"

She turned, and eyed him severely.

"Then," he added, with deliberation and emphasis. At the same time he invaded the rocking-chair, where she had again seated herself. "Nina, you have come to stay?"

"No, indeed," she said, giving him her hand in a tired fashion; "this is but a call. I wanted to put in the time this evening, and to tell you that I don't wish to go back to the Forrests. They have disagreeable neighbours. You must either send me to a hotel or let me go to London."

He smiled peculiarly and calmly, and took possession of both her hands with the emphatic words: "I want to hear from my wife what has happened to send her to me in such haste that she had not time to dress herself suitably for the street."

"I got a most horrible fright," she said, wriggling her head uneasily from his shoulder, where he was trying to persuade it to lie, and where she did not



wish it to remain. "A madman came and told me he was my father."

"A madman!" he repeated, in a puzzled, almost startled tone.

"Yes," and she related the manner of her escape: "I got a cab on the Prince's Road and it took me all the way to the landing-stage. Then I got a tender, — I couldn't help spending so much money. I was so frightened and I wanted to get to you," she said, winding up with a sob.

It recalled him to himself. A kiss that, under the circumstance, she thought it best to endure was imprinted on her forehead. "You did perfectly right, my impulsive darling. It is Lady Forrest who is to blame. I requested her never to leave you alone."

"Why shouldn't she leave me alone?" said Nina, sharply.

He did not reply; and, motioning him to a chair, she perched herself on his knee, — an honour that he accepted with uneasy delight, when he found it accompanied by the taking of his head between her two hands, and the inexorable scrutiny of his face by two brilliant eyes.

"'Steban," she said, sweetly and sadly, "in some respects you are not a very nice man."

He felt relieved, but she went on: "I mean to



say that you are not easy to get on with on account of your dreadful temper, but" — and here she brought his face as close to hers as their two noses would allow — "with all your faults I know that you would not tell me a lie on a serious subject."

He began to feel uneasy again, and his uneasiness increased when she broke down and hid her face on his shoulder. "Oh, 'Steban, — I say that man was mad, but he was not mad. He is my father really, truly, isn't he? Tell me."

There was a long silence. Captain Fordyce gently stroked the back of her head, but made no effort to utter a word.

"Is he my father?" asked Nina, suddenly lifting her face.

He did not reply.

"Will you tell me?" and her voice was almost fierce.

"How can I tell?" he muttered at last. "I did not see him."

She pushed him away from her, and sprang to her feet. "Is my father a good man?"

"A good man," he repeated, restlessly. "What is a good man?"

"You know what I mean," she said, harshly. "Is he like you?"



"He is certainly not like me," he replied, with a grim and feeble attempt at pleasantry.

She repulsed his sympathetic hand, and flung herself across the room.

"Nina," he called after her, in a voice vibrating with compassion, "come back."

She turned a deaf ear to him, and kneeling on a seat by the window stared out into the night. She saw nothing. The outside world was as black and confused as her own thoughts. She remained mute, unthinking almost, until a slight and reminiscent sound stirred even her sluggish mind.

She remembered the soft and not unpleasing tones of that voice, and she turned around. The door had opened softly and closed again; and, standing with his back against it, was the man with the quiet, sneering face. He was smiling stealthily at her husband, — her husband who had forgotten her, and who stood with a white, still anger on his brow, a contemptuous hatred in his eyes. These two men were enemies. Nina saw it in the careless malice of the one, and the smothered anger of the other; and, crawling painfully across the room, she stood between them.

The newcomer straightened himself and looked over her shoulder. "You are outwitted, Fordyce,



otherwise you never would have afforded me the sight of my daughter. Thank Heaven I had the thought of sending you the false report of my death."

"I have never believed a word that came out of your lying mouth," said Captain Fordyce, disdainfully. "Come, now, what do you want? You must take yourself away from here."

"What do I want?" inquired the stranger. "I want my daughter, of course. I hear you ill-use her and have the cold shoulder turned toward you. I suppose she ran back to you because women are fools enough to like those who ill-treat them. I hope she will come to London with her loving father," and with a flattering change of manner he appealed to Nina.

She dropped her eyes to her wedding ring and slowly turned it round and round on her finger. She was not angry with this man any more. He was certainly her father: and dear Mr. Israel Danvers was fading, fading into obscurity. And her husband hated her father. There could be no mutual agreement, no settlement of difficulties between them. Neither could there be any question of her duty.

"Go on, plead your case," said Captain Fordyce,



addressing his caller in a voice of concentrated passion, "and make haste to get out of this."

The man by the door smiled in an evil way, and again addressed his daughter. "Will you go with me, Bertha?"

She did not recoil at the strange name, but, lifting her eyes, fixed him with a firm and steady gaze.

"Go with him," said Captain Fordyce, in an ironical voice. "Go with the honourable, kind-hearted gentleman."

There was an ominous silence in the room. Everything seemed hushed and breathless, waiting for the girl's answer.

"I cannot go with you," she said, clearly; "because I am married to this man."

"Marriage," said her parent, derisively, "what is it? — a few jabbered words — and you will never be happy with that bully. You had better take the night express for London with me."

The girl's face suddenly became cold, hard, and unsympathetic. Then it softened, and gave traces of an inward and severe mental struggle; and she spoke swiftly and surely. "You are my father, certainly, but it is better to speak the truth. I have never known you. If I was taken from you by that man," and she hurriedly indicated her husband, "he



had some good reason for it. I see that our aims and motives in life are different. I do not think we could help each other. I am sorry, deeply sorry, but I think you had better go away. I—" She stamped her foot in abrupt anger with herself, but she had lost self-control. The usual flood-gates of passion were open, and wildly and excitedly exclaiming, "Oh, please go away, — please go away!" she threw herself into the big rocking-chair and hid her face against its back.

Captain Fordyce opened the door, and spoke in a low voice to the man as he passed him: "Years ago you abused and tortured the gentle creature who had been kind to me. Do you think I would be such a fool — such a base, senseless fool — as to allow a second victim to fall into your hands?"

The quiet man looked ugly, shrugged his shoulders, and pretended to suppress a yawn. Then he gazed coldly into the livid face confronting him.

"Have you got a sovereign about you? I was in such haste to pursue my fleeing daughter that I left my purse behind me."

"Here are five pounds for you," said the other, scornfully, "now get out."

"I suppose that old warrant for child-stealing might possibly give you some trouble with your



employers if I were to bring it up," continued the stranger, insinuatingly.

"Not a particle. Here's your boat. Quarter-master, give this man a hand over the side; and tell a boy to be ready in five minutes to go ashore with a note to Prince's Road."



## CHAPTER XVIII.

### DISTRESS AND SWEET SUBMISSION.

“My father is not a good man, my father is not a good man !”

Captain Fordyce stood biting his lip. He was looking down on the sofa in the darkened room where Nina had been lying for a day and a night. At last he said, roughly, “I gave you credit for more spirit, Nina.”

She stopped talking to herself, and rolled her head over on the cushion in his direction.

“It is silly,” he went on, with assumed sternness. “He has forgotten all about you by this time.”

She set her small mouth obstinately. “I cannot help that. It just drives me wild. Oh, 'Steban, 'Steban, why did you let me see him? Why didn't I stay in America?” and she again hid her white, distressed face.

Captain Fordyce frowned, appeared puzzled, then, coming to a swift conclusion, began rapidly turning out the contents of a chest of drawers on the floor.



The unusual noise disturbed his nervous and suffering wife, and she once more fixed her attention on him. "'Steban dear, please don't make such a noise."

"It won't last long," he said, firmly. "I am going to Paris."

"To Paris!" and she straightened herself on her cushions.

"Yes, — have to run over on business, — sorry to leave you, Nina."

"To leave me, — but I can't be left. Why, 'Steban, I feel as if I were going to die," and her lip trembled. "I can't eat, and I can't sleep, and —"

"Telegraph me if anything happens, — if that man should bother you again, or —"

"'Steban!" and she sprang to her feet. "I can't be left, — I shall go, too!"

He concealed his extravagant joy, and bent low over a box of cuffs and collars.

Nina dragged herself across the room to him. "'Steban," she said, weakly, "have I been very trying this last day?"

"Very," he growled.

"I will be good now," she murmured, "and 'Steban —"

"Yes," he said, encouragingly.



She was standing over him now, erect, pale, womanly, her fingers just touching his shoulder. "My copy-books used to tell me that adversity is the trial of principle; and for the one thing that remains to me unchanged through this unhappy affair — for you — I am deeply thankful. To know that, though alone, I am not alone; that since childhood you have watched over me with the jealous eye of affection; and that now I belong to you, is the only comfort I have." And seizing his hand, the strong, brown hand that had toiled so many years for her, she pressed it against her lips.

He was silent for a short time, then he remarked, in a muffled voice, "Will you really go to Paris with me?"

"Yes, 'Steban," she said, sweetly.

He pushed the clothes aside brusquely, and, stalking across the room, gazed silently out the window. After a long time he looked over his shoulder. "And after we come back — what do you wish to do?"

"That I leave to you," she responded, with an entirely new and bewitching humility.

A swift beatific smile hovered about his lips; and, looking as if he could scarcely believe his senses, he approached her, but swung on his heel when he saw



the shy and startled expression that passed like a shadow over her face.

"'Steban," she said, nervously, "I can't get those people out of my head. I mean the Danvers. They are my real parents. I love them more and more. It is not wrong?"

"Wrong, no, — like them as much as you wish."

"I cannot love that man," she said, shudderingly. "He is my father, — I ought to, yet I cannot."

"You need not like him. He is not worthy of it. I have had a longer acquaintance with him than you have. He never was anything much, and he is deteriorating all the time."

"What does he do for a living?" asked Nina, wistfully. "I thought he looked poor."

"He deserves to be poor."

"What is his business?"

"I don't know."

"You don't want to know. I am afraid he is a friend of Mr. Delessert's," she murmured, in a distressed way.

"I dare say."

"Probably my — my father told him all about me, and, knowing he travelled by sea a good deal, asked him to find out what he could about me when he came in contact with you."



"Probably."

"'Steban," said Nina, with an unexpected transition from mournful curiosity to appealing tenderness, "respect is the first step to love, isn't it?"

"Yes, birdie."

"And I respect you."

"I hope so."

"But you won't tell me things, and I am just dying with curiosity, — righteous curiosity. And I am going on a nice, nice journey with you, and I won't cry any more, and will do everything you want me to, and won't you tell me everything about myself?"

He smiled amiably and fatuously, and occupied himself by gently caressing his moustache.

"Once I was very obdurate," she went on. "I said: 'He is altogether too reserved; I shall never, never like him till he tells me everything he knows.' Now don't you think the time has come?"

She stood with her head on one side like a demure and fascinating robin, and her husband helplessly surveyed the door. If he could escape while there was yet time, this coaxing humour would pass away. But she would be too clever for him. He saw himself, simpleton, weak-minded idiot, and various other despised names in his vocabulary,



wheedled into a seat, the inquisitive robin perched close beside him, reluctant secrets falling from his lips.

Nina was intently watching him, and her demure smile was turning to a proud one. "Go," she said, pointing to the door, "I have changed my mind. I do not wish to know your secrets."

He hesitated, and stared helplessly at her.

"Or," she said, "I will make my demand for them from a change of basis. I am going to be a good wife to you — just as good as I know how. You have borne a great many burdens alone. I ask for my share of them."

"Nina!" he said, rapturously.

"I may not come up to your expectations," she said, wistfully; "but I will try."

He suppressed his exultation, and sat down soberly beside her. "I beg your pardon, darling; I have the fullest confidence in you. I will tell you anything you choose to ask."



## CHAPTER XIX.

### IN PLEASANT SUMMER WEATHER.

“WHO could think of storms and shipwrecks in an atmosphere like this?”

The sun was setting in a gorgeous bank of cloud that presaged weather fine and settled for days to come. Its last rays glowed on a vast expanse of ocean, calm and brilliantly blue. Sky and sea were alike at peace and beautiful.

“Yes, storms and shipwrecks seem idle dreams,” murmured Nina, again.

There was only one restless thing in the whole extent of the wide horizon,—the huge steamer cutting her way swiftly through the deep blue waves, and seeming in the silence that brooded over the waste of waters to be a living, sentient thing. In the quiet of this exquisite summer evening, her movements appeared unseemly. Ah, no, they were not! She had a reason. Every throb of her iron heart seemed to say, “Make haste, make haste, a day will come when the tiny, guileless waves lapping



your sides will be transformed into raging, furious fiends, dashing themselves against your iron plates as if to wrest your living victims from you."

Nina shuddered, and, extending her body seawards, looked down at the track of frothy white foam trailing out behind her; and at this moment when her thoughts were far away, when her eyes were trying to pierce the depths of the beautiful fickle element below, some one came softly behind her, and uttered the prosaic words, "Dinner is served, ma'am."

"Thank you, I don't care for any," she observed, with a start; and the too attentive Merdyce crept disappointedly away.

Nina tried to resume her interrupted soliloquy, but the charm was broken. She cast a regretful glance at the sparkling sea, the rosy sky; then, turning, looked down a near skylight into the dining-saloon. Everybody was at dinner. The stewards, like kindly birds of prey, hovered over the long tables, then departing, wheeled and circled about the corners of the room, in their efforts to obtain fresh supplies of food for their hungry charges.

The *Merrimac* was carrying several hundred people out to the high seas; many nationalities, many grades of society, were represented; and Captain Fordyce



sat with keen, observant eyes bent on this last assemblage of precious souls committed to his care. He seemed lonely, and even though she wished no dinner, Nina reflected that she might go and bear him company.

"What are you grumbling to yourself?" she asked, jauntily, as she terminated a walk down the crowded room by slipping into a seat beside him.

He pushed away his soup plate without replying.

"Tell me, I wish to know," she said, commandingly.

"It was a thought, and thoughts are sacred things."

"A man should have no secrets from his wife," she murmured, with a severity that she knew would be pleasing to him.

Thus admonished, he said, softly: "The sweetly uncertain manners of girlhood, and yet the self-possession of a duchess."

"Just praise is only a debt, but flattery is a present," we read in the *Rambler*; and the gift laid before the girl came from one who gave to few, and that not often. In secret delight she dropped her eyes beneath the eloquent glance that went even further than the words, and murmured something about a paradox.



He smiled, then said, in a low voice, "Do you know what this is?"

"This?" she said, nodding toward a salt-cellar upon which he had concentrated his attention. "Yes, certainly. I was taught at school, — a small vessel for holding the chloride of sodium, a substance used as —"

"Nina," he said, fondly and under his breath, "don't be provoking. You know what I mean. Your coming in here and sitting down beside me is a proclamation of the fact that you are my wife, my bride. See how those people are staring. They are probably saying: 'Has that charming young creature fallen a prey to that sea-wolf?'"

Regardless of the curious glances, she frowned menacingly at him. Then, unheeding his request that she would stay and sensibly take her dinner with him, she got up and stole out of the room, not in the approved-of duchess fashion, but with the air of "a conscious simpleton, a bashful sneaksby."

In the ladies' cabin on deck she found a pretty, golden-haired child, to whom she made friendly advances, and with whom she played until a French maid appeared to carry it, reluctant and tearful, away to bed.

Then the people came up from dinner, and before



Nina could escape she was pounced upon by an elderly maiden. The celerity with which travellers by sea become acquainted with each other is only equalled by the celerity with which they forget each other ; and in an incredibly short space of time Nina had listened to a long and detailed account of a list of ills that a sea-voyage was supposed to cure. Sheer exhaustion at last forced her to stop, and Nina was free.

She found a quiet corner outside, and curling herself up in a deck-chair sat staring at the sky, and listening dreamily to the confused variety of sounds about her.

After the lapse of an hour the pangs of hunger assailed her. She sprang up, and in two minutes found herself in front of the steward's pantry. The lord high steward himself, a very grand personage, seeing who it was, condescended to wait on her.

"I want a chicken," she said, mildly. Then, by way of explanation, "I had no dinner, — and you may give me something to drink. What is in those bottles?" and she pointed to the wall where tiers on tiers of shelves rose above each other.

"Ale and porter, ma'am. We've got thousands of bottles, and they'll all be gone before we get home. That's saying nothing of the wines that'll be drunk. Will you have one?"



"No, thank you."

"The captain never touches a drop of these things, that is at sea," said the man, with a comprehensive wave of his hand behind him. "From port to port he's a strict T. T. That's out of regard to the feelings of some of his passengers, — temperance folk."

"Will you please give me that chicken?" said Nina.

"Shall I send it for you, ma'am?"

"No, I am going to carry it somewhere."

He turned, spoke to a satellite, then handed her through the window a bird of moderate size on a very large plate.

"Do you think you can manage it?" he asked, anxious, and slightly surprised.

"Manage a chicken," she murmured; "well, I should rather think so. Oh! please give me a napkin;" and putting the plate on the floor, she turned back.

He handed her one that she unfolded and carefully spread over the outstretched legs and wings of the defunct fowl. Then she began her progress down the passage.

The steward craned his neck out the window. "An odd little card! I wonder where she's going."



All went well with her until she approached a stairway that wound aggravatingly upward. There the chicken began to show signs of animation, wobbling about on the plate, and wildly kicking the napkin as if to dislodge it. Nina laughed; then, with eyes glued on her burden, tried to walk back steadily.

Some one came leaping down the stairs, and in her anxiety to avoid a collision she stepped aside too quickly. "Oh, my chicken!" she cried, sorrowfully staring at the empty plate in her hand.

"Alive or dead?" asked a laughing voice.

Nina looked up, and saw standing above her a sprightly, laughing boy.

"Alive," she said; "it has taken to itself wings and flown away. It was in mortal terror of serving for my supper."

"It went down that alley-way, didn't it?" he asked.

"Yes, please ask that steward to go after it. And now I must go for another."

"May I have the pleasure of carrying that plate for you?" asked her new friend, with sedate politeness.

She put it in his outstretched hand, and together they wended their way toward the pantry.

"Another chicken, please," said Nina to the steward, who was still looking out. With a mystified



air, he produced another, and Nina added, hastily, "And some crackers and a bottle of lemonade. I forgot them before."

These latter things she took possession of herself, then turned away, her handsome, obsequious companion trotting after her.

"Not accustomed to such rapid exercise," she heard murmured as she reached the outer air. He was leaning with languid grace against a cabin door, and she paused and observed contritely that she did not know how fast she was going.

"Oh, I don't really care," he said, with charming impudence. "I just wanted you to stop and speak to me. What a jolly night it is!"

She looked sharply at him. Yet his fresh, young face really was alight with wonder and admiration as he gazed up at the blue vault above them.

"Have you ever studied astronomy?" he asked.

"Yes," she returned, guardedly, "I have a smattering of it."

"Stars ought to be the best astronomers," he went on, "for they have *studded* the heavens since the world began." Then walking across the deck, he stuck his knees in the bulwark, and, steadying the plate on the top of the rail, said: "Do you know the name of that constellation near the pole-star?"



"No," she replied, regretfully, "I don't."

"It is Cassiopeia's chair," he said, gravely. "I wonder whether she found it comfortable. She was sphered at her death, you know. Neptune sent a great sea-serpent to ravage the kingdom of her husband, a king of Ethiopia, because she, naughty Cassiopeia, had had the presumption to declare herself fairer than the sea-nymphs. Astonishing, isn't it, how vain women are?"

"I know what those two stars are," said Nina, drawing her lemonade bottle from under her arm, and pointing it skywards, "Castor and Pollux, twin brothers, who, unlike any specimens of perfect youth we have nowadays, were so much attached to each other that Jupiter set them among the stars."

"H'm, yes," the boy replied. "I didn't know that before. And so they are twins. They are certainly very much alike."

Nina laughed, looked again at the luminous bodies that point by point resembled each other, until she heard a quick, "O malignant and ill-boding stars!"

His voice was deeply tragic now. Star-gazing had made him forget the chicken committed to his care; the plate had tipped; the fowl, hesitating not an instant, had taken a swift glide down the inclined



plane into the ocean. For the second time Nina had lost her supper.

"What bad taste!" exclaimed the boy, gloomily. "You have such pretty teeth, and a shark — oh, horrors!" Then, rapidly, and in the same breath, he asked, "Why have fowls no future state?"

He waited an instant only for her answer, then rattled off: "Because they have their next world in this world, — necks twirled in this world. *Comprenez-vous?* Now may I get you another?"

"Another what, — a conundrum or a chicken?"

"The latter," he answered, soberly.

"What, — three chickens in one evening?" said Nina. "No, thank you. Think of the reputation for greediness you would put upon me. I shall content myself with the crackers and lemonade now, and that reminds me — I must go and eat them."

"Where?" he asked, eagerly.

"In the chart-room."

"That belongs to the captain, and are you travelling under his wing, too, Miss — Miss — I don't know your name," he added, suggestively.

"Miss Truecumtrotty," said Nina, demurely.

"What a beautiful name! I suppose you are a schoolgirl whom he is taking home," he said, with such waggish politeness, such inimitable drollery of



tone and manner, that Nina was sorely tempted to forget her newly acquired dignity, to return to the days of her youth, and have a game of romps with this queer, delightful boy.

"He's supposed to keep an eye on me, too," he went on, with a shiver; "and by no means happy is this miserable little dolphin who sails in the huge, great shadow of a British whale; and I'm off for my health, too. I'm quite ill, though I don't look it," and his liquid eyes were raised wickedly and confidently to her face.

"And won't you say something against Captain Fordyce?" he went on, after a short pause; "do, just to comfort me. We're in the same boat, you know. You are young and charming. So am I. If he keeps one down, he will the other. He told me to-day that I was not to go up on the bridge. Such impertinence! I'll knock him down if he speaks that way to me again,—the old griffin!"

The boy was going too far. Nina gave him one sweeping, withering glance, vouchsafed him a rebuking, "Captain Fordyce is my husband. He could shake you all to pieces with one finger, you saucy little boy!" then she abruptly left him.

She would never speak to him again; and she must not put her foot on the bridge ladder till



she became somewhat cooler. Her husband would want to know what had irritated her; so she paced slowly along the deck, stopping before every cabin door, and peering down every skylight she came to. The steady, subdued roar of the machinery possessed a curious charm for her. She would like to have explained to her the workings of those wonderful engines that day by day kept urging them onward.

"'Steban," she said, precipitating herself into his presence, "I want to penetrate the innermost recesses of the ship to-morrow. You will take me, will you not?"

He sat stock-still. He was working out some problem, and not even for her would he interrupt it. She had to wait fully five minutes before he finished. Then he jumped up, and offered her the chair he had been sitting in.

"No, thank you," she said, seizing the leg of a stool under the table, and dragging it out. "I want this. I am going to stay a little while, — that is, if you are not busy."

"No, I am not busy," he replied, quietly and contentedly, "I have just finished. What have you got in your arms?"

"Something to eat," she said, briskly. "I am



starving, and I want the cork taken out of this bottle, please."

While she was watching him do it, there was a knock at the door. As she was nearest, she opened it. Her schoolboy friend stood before her, his cap in one hand, a small dish in the other.

"I have brought you some cold beef, Mrs. For-dyce," he said, without raising his eyes, and with such affecting humility of manner that Nina bit her lip to keep from laughing. "There was nothing else," he added, sadly; "the stewards say there has been an unusual run on the fowls this evening."

Nina threw resentment to the winds, and gave him her sweetest smile of acknowledgment. "It was kind in you, very kind to trouble yourself about it."

He raised his eyes, impudent and merry as ever, to her face. "I have brought only a little seasoning," he said, meaningly, "only a scant supply of anything hot, — pepper, mustard, and the like. In some way or other I fancied you wouldn't require much;" and, running down the steps, he disappeared.

"Who was that?" asked her husband, as she returned to her seat.

"A naughty, naughty boy, but very nice. I don't know his name."



"What is his age?" asked Captain Fordyce, jealously.

"Fifteen, I should say. He pretends to know you."

"Oh, young Dacy, — he is only a child," and he looked relieved.

"I met him when I was coming here with a chicken. I had a whole one in case you would like a piece. He came tumbling down-stairs and almost made me fall. Then we got talking."

Her companion forgot to reply, in the absorbing attention he was giving her.

"Don't sit there staring at me like — like a Dutch dog!" exclaimed Nina, throwing an infinitesimal bit of cracker at him. "It always makes me think you are trying to mesmerise me. Do something."

He submissively took up a book.

"How stupid men are!" she ejaculated. "Don't you see I am just in the humour for a talk? Put that book down this instant."

He dropped it with a smile.

"You may smoke," she observed, graciously; "I know you are dying for the permission."

He reached behind him, and, taking down a pipe, carefully filled and lighted it.



“Nasty, detestable habit,” she said, with a cough ; “do you know it is killing you by inches ?”

He looked not a whit disturbed, and, after a careful review of his features, she said, jealously : “Other men have smoking-caps. You ought to have one. I wonder what would be most becoming to you : dark blue velvet, embroidered with red, or dark green, with yellow. I think the blue. What are you smiling at ?”

He took his pipe out of his mouth long enough to say, “To see you practical again. You have had your head in the clouds all day.”

“It was a dream,” she said, “that set me off. I thought I was at home. Then it was so strange to wake up and find myself not in a large, cheerful apartment, but ‘cabined, cribbed, confined.’ The room, though the best on the ship, is still small enough and dark, too, for we were near the dock, weren’t we, and there were things against the windows. Then wandering about and seeing the preparations made for our departure was stranger still. ‘Steban, what a tremendous mail came on board. I counted the bags. It was so queer to see the men carrying them on their shoulders, and dropping them down that hole under the floor in the dining-saloon. Then the passengers arrived, — what a motley crew ! — some in rags, some in velvet gowns. I pitied the



steerage people, some of them looked so ill. I gave my travelling rug to an old Irishwoman. I shall not need it, the weather is so warm."

"You should not have done that," he said, between his closed teeth. "Why did you not tell me about your Irish acquaintance? I would have given her a blanket, — a thing better suited to her condition in life than an expensive, fur-lined rug. And what will you do on chilly evenings?"

"I will take the blanket," she said, menacingly. "Are you trying to scold me?"

"Yes," he said, helplessly, "I am trying, but it is a dead failure. Whatever I may do in the future, now, at least, I could not utter a harsh word to you to save my life."

"You never did scold me much," she said, flatteringly. "You were only obstinate, and wouldn't tell me things. You are better now, and I am sorry I was so thoughtless to-day."

She was rambling about the room now in her usual restless fashion. The supper had been disposed of, and she was in search of some other entertainment. Her husband suddenly threw an arm around her as she passed him. Then she was placed on his knee, his pipe was laid on the table, and both her hands were grasped firmly in his.



Nina pouted visibly, for she saw that she was about to be favoured with one of his now frequent avowals of intense, repressed affection.

"I have not had you in my arms all day," he murmured, with slow, passionate kisses. "You have taken no more notice of me than if I were a table or a chair. Of all disappointing, will-o'-the-wisp, elusive works of creation, commend me to a girl in her teens."

"I have spoken to you six times, and made ten faces at you," said Nina, reproachfully, and rolling her head from side to side on his broad breast to dodge an impending caress that came relentless, unavoidable as fate. "If you dare to kiss me again, I shall not speak to you for a week," she said, warningly, as she struggled into a more dignified position; and he did not, although he muttered something grumblingly to the effect that she was a little bold, cruel thing.

Nina retired to a corner of the room, where she sat for some time evidently pondering some weighty matter. Suddenly she burst out with a remark: "'Steban, you are getting to be more obedient now. Why is it?"

"Possibly because you are better fitted to command."



"I am just exactly what I used to be."

"Pardon, — you are changing."

"What do you think I am changing from?"

"A wayward bit of girlish obstinacy, fretting at the idea of being bound to me, to a woman in love with her fetters and the person to whom they bind her."

"Your conceit is perfectly overcoming. I am just the same as ever. I am not in love with you. This — this feeling that has taken possession of me is one of profound gratitude."

"Profound gratitude! Did gratitude make you wretched when you were at the Forrests?"

"That was only loneliness. I know that I have not fallen in love with you because — because —"

"Because what?"

"You will laugh at me."

"No, I won't, — honour bright."

"Well," she said, hanging her head, "it is because I have none of that feeling of delicious shyness that novels tell us should overpower us in the presence of the beloved one."

Captain Fordyce, in spite of his promise, burst into a laugh.

"It is a proof," she said, in an injured tone, "a sure proof. I can never feel that way with you."



I cannot tremble at your footstep and blush when I look at you ; therefore, I am not in love with you. I shall never be in love with any one."

There was a half-revealed anxiety in her voice, and her husband stopped laughing. "Take into account the fact that I have been before you ever since the dawning of your intelligence," he said, soberly. "You don't want to blush before such a familiar object. The love that increases by degrees is so like friendship that it can never be violent, some one says."

"It seems to me that the bloom was taken off my love affair," said the girl, in a troubled voice. "I wish I had not known you all my life."

An unhappy frown settled on her husband's brow ; and he was muttering something about regret for having disturbed her girlish ideals, when she interrupted him.

"What a wretch I am to say such things ! You have been so good to me all these years. I don't believe there is another man in the world who would have put up with me. 'Steban, what makes me so capricious and unsettled ?"

"What *made* you?" he said, pointedly. "You are not now."

"But I dare say I shall be again. You don't



understand me, 'Steban. I feel as if I belonged to quite a different race from you. You are more like dogs and horses and those things. You can always be depended on. I know one thing will make you angry and another will make you happy. While I, — why, a thing that charms me to-day may disgust me to-morrow, or it may charm me again. I can't tell. Oh, dear, I wish I were a man!" and she wearily subsided.

"I don't," said her husband, with an amused chuckle; "your variableness is your greatest charm. Provided a woman has one or two solid essentials of character at bottom, all this change on the surface is but fascinating. Your wider range of feelings and emotions makes you more interesting than men. For instance, — to find you always a placid, smiling doll would bore me to death; but when I lay my fingers on the handle of my door I never know what I may find within. There may be a young tomboy climbing over the furniture; or an elderly young prude sitting stiffly, with a book in hand, who will draw herself up and look at me through imaginary spectacles when I speak to her; or there may be a fashionable young lady in high-heeled shoes and an elaborate gown, who will turn up her nose at my rough coat; or there may be a motherly young per-



son, who will warn me against the perils of the pipe and the bottle; or there may be a demure young kitten, who will creep into my arms and let me fondle her to my heart's content."

Nina was listening in profound attention. "And which do you prefer?" she asked, when he finished.

"The last, I think, though all are well enough in their turn."

"Well, there's some queerness about men, too," said Nina, taking up the cudgels for her sex.

"Far queerer than women, my dear, and with more of a strain of the brute. However, every woman, be she saint or angel, has in her a scrap of devilry."

"'Steban!" she said, reproachfully.

"She has, birdie; latent or patent, it's there all the same; and a man who undertakes to govern a woman without recognising that fact is an idiot."

"Men don't govern women. Women govern them."

"Do they?" he said, amiably.

"You speak with authority," she said, jealously. "You have always pretended that you didn't know anything about any women but Mrs. Danvers and me."

"You are a host in yourself."



“You have had friendships, flirtations even,” she said, rebukingly; “and I have known nothing about them, and you have made me tell you every single thing that ever happened to me. Now I am ready to hear your adventures. Please begin.”



## CHAPTER XX.

### THE SECRET OF HER LIFE.

SHE moved to a chair close beside him, and, leaning back, closed her eyes so that he could the more easily make his confession.

There was a long silence, then she opened her eyes with a jerk. To her disappointment, he sat quietly smoking.

"You are a secretive, unkind, cruel husband," she said, warmly. "Aren't you ever going to tell me all your secrets?"

"Perhaps, — when you fall in love with me," he said, teasingly. "It wouldn't be proper now."

Nina, too, became animated by a spirit of mischief. "Tell me about that rich widow," she said, aggravatingly, "who had a nice place on the Hudson, and wanted you to go visit her with a thought of marriage in her mind."

"You little witch," said the man, abruptly and wonderingly; "how did you find that out?"



"Ah! you are as red as fire," said Nina, triumphantly; "she asked you to marry her."

He suppressed an ejaculation, and stared helplessly at her.

"Women are cleverer than men," breathed the girl. "You thought I knew nothing about that affair. My dear sir, if I were interested in a man, — as I hope to be in you some day," she interpolated, modestly, — "I would find out what he was thinking about."

"You young ferret, — you have been reading letters."

"Not a letter; I have put together things, though, — a word, a look, a hint, a photograph with shaky writing on the back. Regular heart-strokes, — my dear 'Steban, I really believe you have been quite in demand. Seasick and grateful lady passengers, *et cætera*;" and she burst into a peal of laughter.

The man looked sheepish, and concentrated his attention on his tobacco pouch.

"I won't tease you any more," she said, subduing her merriment. "Tell me something else I want to know. You haven't wanted to marry me all these years. You couldn't have fixed a matrimonial eye on me when I was an imp of a baby. Come now,



confess the hour that your thoughts first went to me with the idea of appropriation."

He became dreamy and reminiscent. One summer evening six years ago, when the shades of night were beginning to fall thickly and heavily over Rubicon Meadows, he was approaching the old-fashioned house on foot. He could see himself now, swinging along the road, his object a hasty visit to assure himself of the well-being of the child committed to his care. He had known children abused by guardians, and he had made up his mind that the one in his charge should never be for any length of time without his personal supervision. And the people with whom she lived should never know when he was coming. That was another resolution to which he should hold firmly. On this particular evening a troop of children ran across his path as he neared the house. They were playing and also quarrelling, and the soft summer air was alive with the sound of their dispute. Tired and cross, and about to be sent to their beds, snappish young tempers had uprisen, and some one was being struck. He could hear the brisk sound ahead; then, to his surprise, his little girl ran toward him. The small warrior was usually able to take her own part, but this time she was set upon and punished by the others.



She had seen him coming and had run to him rather than to her mother; and at this moment he could see the dishevelled hair, the twisted face, the torn cotton frock. He could feel the pressure of those childish arms about his neck, and the tremor of her lip against his ear, as she sobbed out a wrathful story of those mean, hateful children who had trooped over from the village for a last delightful game of cross-tag, and then had set upon her and beaten her.

She was in the wrong of it. She had cheated, the other children told him; but she was his own and they were aliens; and as he good-naturedly sent them home and led her into the house, comforting her with candy and cakes hidden in his pockets, the swift and sudden conviction came upon him that this charge of his youth was to be the wife of his manhood.

The conviction had grown and deepened, but he would not tell her about it just now. It was a story that would keep. He would rather make sure of a time when she would not laugh at him, and just now a doubt hung over her conduct.

Therefore he would not answer her, and her volatile mind went off to another subject. "'Steban, do you look most like your father or your mother?'"

"My mother," he said, briefly.



“I should like to have seen her,” said Nina, gazing pensively at the lamp. “She was a fair, no, a dark young thing, that an English skipper fell in love with when his vessel was in a Spanish port. He did not even know her language. They made signs, I suppose. After three short weeks’ acquaintance they were married, and she ran away to sea with him. He brought her to England to a dear little cottage by the sea. There they lived, and there one son was born to them.”

“Whom the foreign mother used to thrash within an inch of his life,” interposed Captain Fordyce, grimly.

Nina tried to suppress a laugh. In vain, — it broke out clear and distinct. “Oh, ‘Steban,” she gasped, “it is too absurd! Whenever I hear any one talking of that exquisite thing, mother-love, I think of you. But” — and she became grave again — “perhaps she could not help it. I can imagine that you might have been — well, just a trifle provoking at times.”

“She should not have beaten me so much,” he said, stubbornly.

“My dear boy,” said Nina, caressingly, “don’t forget that her husband’s death and being among strangers soured her temper; and you must have



liked her a little. You were sorry when she died, were you not?"

To her surprise, he vouchsafed no answer to this question. "You have the real John Bull prejudice against 'furriners,'" she said, jestingly. "How is it that you endure me? I am virtually an American."

His lips formed the word, "No."

"I am," she said, "and it is your own doing. You took me away from England, from my mother, — my poor darling mother whom I never knew, — and she died of a broken heart. Why did she marry that man?"

"Heaven only knows," he said, gruffly. "He never was anything but an oily sneak."

"Would you have married her if she had waited?" asked Nina.

For the second time she saw one of the longed-for blushes on the face of her husband, — a fiery, violent colour that worked itself over his sunburnt cheeks and down his brown neck.

"She was not very much older than you," she went on, sweetly, "and you must have been very fond of her."

"As fond of her as if she had been my sister, and no fonder," he said, impatiently. "Don't suggest



that other relationship. I can't tell you how it annoys me."

"Some things that you mind I shouldn't think you would," said Nina, wonderingly; "and others that you don't mind I should think would drive you crazy. You are queerer than I am."

He was deliberately putting away his pipe, and she knew what was coming. After the fashion of mankind, he was going to swear that he had never loved any woman but herself, that even to mention another was an insult to him.

"Oh, yes," she said, hastily, "I know. I beg your pardon, and do sit down. You have adored me all your life. All other women have been walking shadows."

"There you are quoting Miss Marsden," he said, disapprovingly. "I don't admire that cynical vein."

"That reminds me, — I have a letter from her somewhere," cried Nina, springing up. "Where did I put it? Merdyce gave it to me here at noon and I forgot to read it. Where, oh, where?" and she began ransacking the table, chairs, shelves, brackets, and even the nautical instruments.

At last she found it under the scrap-basket beside the table, and sat down on the floor for its perusal, uttering presently a joyful scream.



"What's the matter?" asked her husband.

"They're engaged, they're engaged, — it was a case of love at first sight. Just what I wished and expected!"

"Who are engaged?"

"Miss Marsden and Captain Eversleigh. Oh, the darlings! What a fine couple they will make!"

"Everybody is falling in love but yourself, little Nina," he remarked. "What a misfortune you can't follow suit!"

"Don't bother me — I want to finish this," she responded, shaking off his hand from the top of her head.

As he continued to stroke her hair she bestowed a frown upon him. "You detestable Spaniard!"

"Nina," he said, irritably reseating himself, "I belong to my father's nation."

She stuffed the letter in her pocket, and jumped up. "Now how can you? If one of your parents was English and the other was Spanish, you must be half and half."

"Very well, I am Spanish and you are English."

"I am not English," she said, resolutely. "I hate English people."

"Come, come, Nina."

"Well, I don't hate them as much as I did, but



I am American. I was brought up in America; and that is my home."

"With your veins full of English blood."

"The country where I played as a child, the country where my friends are, the country where I went to school, the country where everything is familiar, — that is my country. I feel as if I were at a party all the time I am in England. It is not home."

"All right," he said, agreeably and absently.

"'Steban," said the girl, solemnly, "let us not occupy ourselves with the present. Let us talk about the past. I can't get out of my head that short bit of history of my mother's life and yours. I wrote it down just the way you told it to me," and she drew a crumpled paper from her breast. "Wouldn't you like to hear it?"

"Very much."

She again curled herself up on the rug at his feet, and began: "Once, many years ago, there lived in a small seaside town a very lovely girl, who had for guardian an old grandmother. They had a little money, — enough to keep them in comfort, — and their lives would have been quite happy, but for one thing that vexed their tender hearts. In the cottage next them lived an unhappy child, a miserable,



ill-used boy, whose mother, being poor and among foreigners, took occasion to vent her spite thereat on the head of her offspring.

“‘He was a provoking boy, bad-tempered, wilful, and ungovernable, so every one said but the young girl and her foolish old grandmother. They spoiled him, gave him kind words whenever he was permitted to cross their threshold, mended his torn garments, and exercised their ingenuity in conveying food to him when he was locked up in starving solitude. When the boy got older, matters improved. His Spanish mother found it was easier to knock about a helpless child than a strong, sturdy lad; so she sent him to school to a fair, apple-cheeked young schoolmaster, as good and wholesome to look at as the boy was ill-favoured and unwholesome.

“‘He had only one fault, this young schoolmaster. He was madly jealous of any one who came between him and the object of his affections, — the lovely young girl with whom he was, or fancied he was, in love. For a long time he had vexed himself over the knowledge that her sisterly interest in the young friendless lad, her neighbour, was so much affection stolen from him. So one can imagine that at the start he was not prejudiced in favour of his new pupil. The boy’s school life was a stormy one.



Worried, held up to derision, and punished on the slightest provocation, he at last ignobly determined that he would do without an education, and ran away to sea.

“ ‘For years he never visited his old home. Then one day he came back. The cottages were both empty; his mother and the old grandmother were dead, and the young girl had married the school-master and had gone to live in London. A strong desire to see the person who had once been kind to him led him to follow her. After some trouble, he found her in an untidy, uncomfortable lodging-house, ill and alone.

“ ‘She was very much changed. Her face was thin and worn, her beauty had all slipped away from her. Still, she said she was well and perfectly happy. Her husband was kind to her, so very kind, she repeated over and over again, but he could not be with her all the time. Now that he was in London there were sights to be seen, and acquaintances to be made, and she did not expect him to sit by her pillow. Still, though her husband was so attentive, the sailor said that he would not leave London for a time, and would take a room near her in case there might be something for him to do. And one day the dying woman took his hand, and made him prom-



ise solemnly that he would fulfil a request she had to make.

“ ‘ He gave her a blind assent, having perfect faith in her. Then she took her tiny child from the cradle beside her, and, putting it in his arms, told him to go at once and hide it in some safe, far-away place, and never, never let its father know where it was. He was a good husband, she said, a good, true husband, — she would never allow any one to say a word against him. But he knew nothing about children ; and though she was sure he would make a good father, she would not for the world have him left sole guardian of her little girl.

“ ‘ The young sailor got a release from a part of his promise. He could not take the child himself, he did not wish to leave London just then ; but he would send it by safe hands to a place where he could find it again. So the child went and the sailor remained, and bore the abuse of the affectionate father, who, enraged at the loss of his little daughter, accused the sailor of having stolen it. Still, wicked and depraved, the young man refused to admit the charge, and even when arrested and brought to the bar of justice managed to clear himself ; so cleverly had he covered up the traces of his guilt.

“ ‘ Well, time went by, and when the news of the



baby's safe arrival in a distant part reached the mother, she too set out on an unknown journey. The sailor saw her laid in the grave ; then, he, amidst the maledictions of the man he had robbed, took his departure.

“ ‘ His little *protégée* was where he could see her occasionally in his voyages to and fro over the earth's surface. She was quite happy, for the people who had taken her treated her as if she were their own child. This was by command of the wicked sailor, who wished the little girl to have a perfect childhood. But at last his villainy cropped out. He stole the child again — a woman now — away from her loving, adopted parents, put her in his ship, and sailed away with her as his father did with his mother, and ’ ” — she concluded, dropping the paper and her stilted tone of narration at the same time — “ ‘ he was actually foolish enough to imagine she was the sort of person who would stay where she was put. ’ ”

“ So she would,” he said, contentedly. “ She would have stayed where she was put till the time came for the sailor to leave England ; then she would have begged to be taken with him.”

“ No, she would not ; she would have gone to London.”

Captain Fordyce brought his hand down energeti-



cally on the table. "Nina, I would give a hundred pounds to have something startle you into saying, 'I love you.'"

She made a hasty effort to change the subject.

Tell me again how you happened to know papa and mama."

"I was sent to them once to recuperate after having fever in a hospital," he said, indulgently. "They lived on a farm in New York State then, and took boarders. Just after you were sent to them they moved to New Hampshire."

"And that enabled them to keep up the fiction of being my parents," said the girl, thoughtfully. "I want to go right back and see them. The others are only dream parents. Yet, I should like, oh, how I should like, to have one glimpse of my real, my very own mother. It seems to me that she is standing by me every night when I go to sleep. I never, never thought of this explanation of myself and my affairs."

Captain Fordyce threw her a pitying glance.

"How you must have laughed when I suggested that I was an heiress," said the girl, vehemently, "how you must have laughed! Didn't you now?"

"I did do some snickering," he admitted, reluctantly.

"It was always so in books," said Nina, warmly,



"always money at stake when there was a mystery ; but in this case mystery was a precaution. You didn't want my father to know where I was."

"No," he said, bluntly.

"And he set spies to watch you, but you were equal to them, and he couldn't find out whether you had me in England or America."

Her husband muttered an unintelligible response.

"And when he sent you news of his death, you were so sure it was a trick preparatory to his making a desperate effort to obtain possession of me, that you decided to marry me?"

"Yes, I married you," he said, shortly ; "don't talk about him."

"How much did you tell Lady Forrest about me?"

"Only that you had an undesirable relative in England whom I did not wish you to meet."

"Would he have kidnapped me?" she inquired, in an awestruck voice.

"I don't know."

"But he is related to me, — that man," she said, passionately. "You must look out for him. I dare say he would like some money."

"He will gamble away precious few of my hard-earned shillings."



"He may get ill."

"In that case we will look after him. You need not fear that I shall forget the relationship he bears to you. While he is in health he is able to look out for himself."

"What does he do for a living?" asked Nina, with a shudder. "That is one thing you did not tell me the other day."

Her husband hesitated, then said, unwillingly: "He is a jack-of-all-trades. His forte used to be gambling; but I believe now he hangs about theatres, — he manages to exist."

"Would he have been unkind to me if I had gone with him?" asked Nina, nervously.

Her husband scowled. "Don't talk about him, — he is a brute. He cares no more for you than for a dog in the streets. Put him out of your thoughts."

Nina leaned her head against a chair seat, closed her eyes, and gave herself up to meditation. In three minutes she scrambled to her feet, and flung her hands out before her. "It's gone!"

"What has gone?"

"My worry. It has flown away, vanished. I shall be happy again."

"Are you not always happy now?" he asked, curiously.



"The last few days—yes. I can scarcely keep my feet on the ground. I wish to fly, but I shall soon be dull. Always it is like that. For a few days I could embrace every one, then I wish to slap the whole world in the face."

"Don't do it, you will get slapped back."

"I am getting old," said the girl, seriously. "An old, old lady told me this afternoon that a day will come when I will see nothing good in life, and will want to die. Do you feel like that, 'Steban?'"

"All the time."

"Story-teller, you do not. You are not hateful and cynical."

"Yes, I am. You don't know me yet."

"You sha'n't be cynical," she said, energetically. "I will not have it," and, rolling her handkerchief in a ball, she threw it at him.

This was a challenge to a frolic, and he rose agreeably. Nina was surveying the door and her chances of getting to it without interruption. They were few, but still she could try. She made a feint of going around one side of a chair, when, in reality, she was going the other, but her ruse was unsuccessful. Her husband was watching her with the attentive eyes of a cat amused at, and bent on capturing, an unfortunate mouse, delivered into his



claws by destiny. Rising, he laid his arm across the door, — an effectual barrier to her outward progress.

“It is getting late,” she said, dancing a frantic *pas seul* about the chair that she had not been able to clear with sufficient speed, “do let me out.”

He brought all his powers of fascination to bear on her. She never caressed him. It was he who bestowed all the endearments. Would she not give him one, just one kiss? His tone, though firm, was despairing, and she knew he had not the faintest hope of getting what he wanted. It would really be amusing to disappoint him.

“You — you corsair,” she said, with an imperious stamp of her foot. “Take your arm away from that door and come here.”

He silently obeyed her.

“Sit down in that chair,” she said, with a flourish of her hand; “now fold your arms. I don’t want them twining around me like the tentacles of an octopus.”

He complied submissively, and then she made a pretence at bashfulness and shyness. For some time she apparently could not approach him; then her will triumphed over her scruples, and he felt a warm breathing against his ear.



“As men go,” she whispered, “you are passable. I can never love you, but I like you passionately.”

The breathing became a ripple of laughter. She suddenly choked him in a childish embrace, then leaving him sitting like a statue, his arms closely pressed together, she darted away.



## CHAPTER XXI.

“ALONE ON A WIDE, WIDE SEA.”

“WHAT fun this is!” exclaimed the pretty boy, Charlie Dacy.

He was convulsed with amusement, filled with unlawful delight. On each side of the companion was a small recess that commanded a view of the steps leading below. He had put Nina in one, and he stood in the other; and he was busily engaged in chaffing the various specimens of humanity who made their way up and down this particular opening to the deck.

Nina knew she ought not to stay, and at intervals made feeble efforts to escape him; but he was so amusing, and was so fond, or pretended to be so fond, of her society, that she could not get away.

“Here come the Hook and Eye,” he exclaimed, gleefully, “I hear them rattling down the passage!”

A lean, gaunt woman in a black bonnet and green veil came tugging up the stairway, a diminutive husband hanging loosely and helplessly on her arm.



The boy politely took off his cap when they came abreast of him. "Does your husband find himself in recovered health this afternoon, madam?"

"Hold your saucy tongue," said the woman, abruptly and unexpectedly, as she passed him.

"Sharper than I thought," he muttered, staggering back as if he had received a blow.

To atone for his misconduct, Nina followed the strange pair out on deck, and quite restored them to good humour by sending a steward to get a comfortable chair for the husband. Then she went back, resolving to exercise her powers of persuasion on Master Charles to get him to leave his present employment, and play shuffleboard with her.

He had both hands up to his mouth when she reached him. With red, inflated cheeks, and a seemingly prodigious exercise of strength, he was in a whisper proclaiming, "Ship ahoy!" He dared not say it aloud, for it was Captain Fordyce who was coming slowly up the stair, his head bent, his handkerchief twisted loosely in his fingers.

The instant his eyes were raised the boy dropped his hands, and stood before him sober and respectful.

Captain Fordyce looked at him, and as the handsome youth had become Nina's almost inseparable companion, he asked, "Where is my wife, Dacy?"



"I think she must be hiding from you, sir. She was here until she saw you coming."

"Here I am," said Nina, coming forward.

"I have got a cinder in my eye, will you take it out?" inquired her husband, stepping out on deck and handing her his handkerchief.

Dacy had followed them, and looked on with interest as Nina warily chased a tiny piece of coal about her husband's inflamed eyelid.

"You should have some flaxseed," he said, critically; "that is the best way to get anything out of the eye. You put in one or two grains, and they swell and emit a sticky substance which covers your eyeball, and takes in the cinder or whatever has got in. Then you just wash the whole thing out, and you haven't irritated your membrane."

"A good scheme," said Captain Fordyce, "but unfortunately there is no flaxseed here. Ah! there it is," and he held up a jagged cinder.

"Whew! that's a large one," exclaimed the boy, pityingly; "why, sir, you've been carrying about a stoker in your eye."

"'A chief engineer,' we call that size," replied Captain Fordyce, dryly, pressing his handkerchief to his face, and looking as if he were about to go away.



"Can't you stay for a little while?" asked Nina, balancing herself against a near boat, and glancing shyly up at him.

He smiled, turned his back to everything on the ship but her, and began to talk in a low tone. This was one of her elusive days. She had scarcely spoken a word to him since breakfast.

While he talked, Prince Charlie sat perched on the rail a little beyond him, in a lonely and disconsolate fashion. He knew that he was not wanted just now; and Nina smiled as she saw, over her husband's shoulder, that he was making a pretence of throwing himself overboard.

Agile, sure-footed as a monkey, how did it happen that when she raised remonstrating eyes after a sentence that, coming from the sensible man before her, was nonsensical to the last degree, she saw that the boy's play had turned to frightful earnest?

He had lost his balance. One glimpse she had of a pale, resolved face, two boyish, eager hands clutching wildly at the rail; then without a sound he dropped bravely into the ocean.

"Man overboard! Man overboard!" The piercing cry rang over the ship, and made her blood run cold in her veins. Then other voices took it up; and her husband, with his foolish sentence not yet



cold on his lips, muttered a strangely mixed "Confound that boy!" and "God bless you, darling!" and was swinging himself over the side of the ship.

Nina clung to his arm with all her strength. "His mother — I promised her to look after him," he said, putting her aside as easily as if she were a baby; and she wrung her hands as he escaped from her grasp.

Some one had thrown a life-buoy. He struck out for it as he reached the water; then with swift, steady strokes swam toward the dash of gold on the blue waters astern, where poor Prince Charlie was making a gallant struggle for life.

The officer of the watch was shouting directions in a calm, stentorian voice: "Stop and reverse! Lower the lee quarter bo-o-at!"

Sailors came hurrying down the deck to fulfil his orders. Nina heard, but did not see them, for her tortured eyes were fixed on the jet-black spot growing fainter and fainter in the distance. Something that was not fear, that was rather exultant pride and agitation, swelled her heart almost to bursting. The tears streaming down her cheeks, she fell on her knees and sent to heaven a frantic, earnest prayer that the strength of his arm might not fail, that his heart might be strong.



But what was this? In one instant, as effectually as if giant hands from the sky had lowered and folded around them a heavy blanket, everything beyond the bulwarks of their ship was cut off from their vision, swallowed up in the fog.

"O God," she muttered, "why must this one day be darkened?"

Then she rose from her knees, hard and unbelieving, now that her petition was about to be denied her. There was no hope now, and what would her life be? Through the sullen folds of the fog she saw stretching out before her a long, black, solitary road leading to an open grave. And she must walk that road alone.

She groped her way across the deck and struggled into her room. Broken-hearted and despairing, her whole soul rebelling with a dull, human protest against the fate that follows us, overshadows and dogs us to the tomb, she stood motionless till out of the terrible hush outside rose a shriek like that of a lost soul.

It was only the fog-horn; but it put into her head a new and ghastly thought. The other was terrible enough, — a vision of feeble, weakening hands, beating helplessly against the waves; but this, — the sickening thought drove her mad. That dear head



in the maw of a monster of the deep, — a blessed oblivion came over her.

One quarter of an hour went by, then another, and at the end of the second Nina turned feebly and murmured, "What is it, Merdyce?"

Ever since the day that he repulsed her in her quest for her husband, the boy had been her faithful, devoted attendant, ready in every case to fulfil her wishes, sometimes even to anticipate them. He was gently shaking her arm now. Never on the face of the great deep would there be a more delighted face rising above a black jacket and brass buttons.

"Have I been asleep?" she whispered. "Why, the sun is shining; it must be morning. And have I been all night on the floor?"

Bit by bit the day came back to her, as he spluttered and gurgled confused sentences.

"They've come — 'twas mortal hard work to find them — a powerful swim — the boy dead weight — had to swim with one hand — the master —"

"What!" shrieked Nina, springing to her feet, "my husband!"

With one bound she was outside. Hundreds of people were thronging the decks, swarming over the skylights, the cabins, the rigging, and from them all



was going up a mighty shout. For the feet of the boat's crew had just touched the deck.

No one noticed her. One brief, upward glance, a short, intense thanksgiving, and then, like a frightened bird kept from her nest, she was circling around the crowd of people, trying to reach the place where she saw standing a wet, capless, coatless, bedraggled figure.

He saw her coming, and opened a way for her. Her eyes were shining with the long-looked-for light, full into his. Below the words of congratulation and confused talk that surrounded him, her low-spoken words pierced his soul, "My darling!—I *do* love you." And he knew that the dream of years was realised at last. She was clinging to his hand, laying her cheek against it, with something new in the caress, — something that had never been there before.

Nor had she eyes for any other person; not even for Prince Charlie, who had come back from the jaws of death only a little sobered, and who was standing in a pool of water beside her, shivering and murmuring, waggishly, "Home they brought her warrior wet."

It drew Captain Fordyce's attention to him. "Dacy, go and put on some dry things," he said,



quickly. Then he turned his attention again to his wife.

She was murmuring fond, wild words to herself. He smiled, whispered a few words in her ear, then, putting her gently aside, went to exchange his brine-soaked garments for other more suitable ones. But he went in peace and in joy, knowing that he would shortly return to her to meet her long delayed but full surrender.



## CHAPTER XXII.

### I LOVE YOU.

It was two years later. Captain Fordyce and his wife were in London, walking leisurely in the vicinity of Buckingham Palace.

There was a drawing-room going on, and they gazed curiously at the long line of carriages drawn up outside the palace; and not only at them, but oftentimes into them.

The carriage occupants took their scrutiny as a matter of course. "'Steban," said his wife, trying to draw him away from what she feared was a too noticeably disapproving survey of the thin shoulders of an emaciated dowager, "what can be going on in this carriage? There is quite a crowd about it."

Looking over the heads of some small urchins in the gutter, they saw two very pretty girls, who were disposing of sandwiches in an exceedingly well-bred manner.

"Slaves to fashion!" remarked Captain Fordyce. "How would you like to be in there, Nina?"



"To sit in a stiff dress and hold a bouquet is not my idea of happiness," she said, smilingly; "yet if I were as lovely as those girls —"

"They have not a tithe of your good looks," he said, with a genuine masculine depreciation of the thing that did not belong to him. Then, turning his back on the fascinating demoiselles, he stifled a yawn, and, consulting his watch, asked whether she did not wish to go back to their hotel.

"Yes, if you like," she said, amiably, pausing to cast a glance into a near-by carriage. Within it, seated beside an officer in a military uniform, was a lady magnificent in ostrich plumes and a gleaming white satin, the train of which was heaped up in billowy white waves on the seat in front of her.

Nina uttered a delighted shriek, and the next instant her head disappeared through the open carriage window, and she was embracing her old friend, Lena Marsden.

"You little barbarian!" exclaimed the latter, kissing her affectionately, and then pushing her back in order to look at her face. "Where have you been these ages past? I have not had a line from you for six months."

"Ask my copper-hearted captain," she said, as her husband, in utter mystification, stepped up behind



her; "he has the cruelty to drag me all about the world with him."

"Don't believe her, Mrs. Eversleigh," said Captain Fordyce, lifting his hat and shaking hands with her; "she made me give up the *Merrimac* because on a steamer it is not always practicable for a man to have his family with him."

"And you have left that fine old ship," said Captain Eversleigh, "where we —" An eloquent glance at his wife completed the sentence.

Captain Fordyce smiled. "Yes, but I have now one of the finest sailing ships afloat, — the *Nina*."

"And where are you?" inquired Mrs. Eversleigh.

"At Southampton," replied Nina; "we are just from Japan."

Mrs. Eversleigh critically surveyed her: a sedate and quiet happiness enveloped the girl; she also looked older and slightly matronly. Yet she had not lost the mischievous gleam from her eye. The old merry, vivacious spirit was visible, subdued but still intact. "You appear foreign," said Mrs. Eversleigh, at last.

"I ought to," observed Nina. "I bought this dress in South America last winter, my hat is from the South Sea Islands, my jacket from Japan, and so on."



“And do you always go with your husband?” Nina’s eyes went to him, and, seeing that he was deep in conversation with Captain Eversleigh, she said, earnestly: “Always, — I should be utterly miserable away from him, and he would be utterly miserable away from the sea. So we manage to keep together. He has everything so comfortable for me. I have a little cabin boudoir, the dearest nest of a place, with curtains of blue satin and a carpet that one’s feet sink into, and busts of all my favourite authors, and a cast of the Milo Venus behind — not a red drapery like the one in the Louvre, but a blue velvet one to match the room, and — ”

“Why, I must come and see all this,” said Mrs. Evresleigh, in an interested way.

“Do come,” said Captain Fordyce, turning to her; “we are only seventy-five miles from London, you know. You can take a run down some morning, and return in the evening if you wish.”

“Yes, let us go,” said Captain Eversleigh, glancing at his wife’s pale face, “a breath of the salt air will do you good,” and he proceeded to make arrangements with Captain Fordyce.

“And where are you going next?” said Mrs. Eversleigh to Nina.



“To Spain for a cargo of wine and fruit.”

“Don’t you get tired of these long voyages? What do you do to amuse yourself?”

“She runs up and down the ship with her baby on her back,” said Captain Fordyce, turning around.

Nina was disturbed. This was an undignified thing to tell the very grand lady before them. “I only do that occasionally,” she said, stiffly; and, darting a rebuking glance at him, “I have a great many other occupations. I read, and sew, and paint, and practise several hours a day. I have a piano and an organ, too.” The old-time childlike naïveté was delightfully revealed in her manner and speech at this moment.

“And she shoots at things hung up in the rigging,” went on her husband, who seemed bent on teasing her, “and talks nonsense to me, and writes letters to the dear five hundred friends she makes in every port we touch.”

Nina’s displeasure had passed away. “And sometimes there are useful things to do,” she said, seriously. “Sometimes sailors get ill,—do you know anything about life on sailing ships, dear Lena Eversleigh?”

“Nothing, whatever.”

Nina shuddered. “There is a great deal of cruelty



in the world. 'Steban tells me of it, and we help a little. I assure you I am quite a changed character from former days."

"Indeed!" said Mrs. Eversleigh, with polite incredulity. She was inwardly wondering how her young friend had been able to retain so much of girlish freshness, sweetness, and caprice.

"I am far more serious," continued Nina, soberly, still bent on revealing the depths which time actually had added to her nature; "you would like me far better now. I don't see how you could have stood me two years ago."

"You were slightly impossible," said Mrs. Eversleigh, suppressing her amusement.

"I used to dislike English people, and I just loved to talk nonsense; and I didn't mean all I said; and though I knew more than people thought I knew, I had no conception of the realities of life, and —"

"In short, you were quite a depraved character," remarked her old friend.

Nina stopped short. They were all laughing at her, and she good-naturedly joined in their amusement.

"Your life sounds a pleasant one," said Mrs. Eversleigh, after a time, and with a faint sigh.



"You don't have that monster fashionable life always biting and worrying at your heels, and urging you into all kinds of excesses."

"Stay with us for awhile, Mrs. Eversleigh," said Captain Fordyce; "and perhaps we will get you out of all this. I want a first mate for my ship. Your husband is a man of many parts, I think we should work well together."

"And I should have you to talk to," exclaimed Nina. "How charming that would be! Don't you want to be a sailor, Captain Eversleigh?"

He glanced at his handsome uniform, laughed heartily, then said: "What are you two people looking forward to? Are you going to sail the wide ocean all the days of your lives?"

"My wife's plan," said Captain Fordyce, "is for us to forsake the sea in about ten or fifteen years, and settle down on shore, and devote ourselves to the education of our child, but one is certain of nothing in this life."

"Well," said Mrs. Eversleigh to Nina, "if you do take up your habitation upon land, let it be near us—and now tell me something about the child. What is he like?"

"He is the most perfect thing you ever saw," cried Nina, rapturously, "a little, dark-haired boy



with an exquisite head, and the sweetest hands and feet, and the disposition of a seraph."

"And only the other morning," said her husband, with qualifying calmness, "I saw him with a handful of your brown hair in his hand."

"Don't believe him, Mrs. Eversleigh," said Nina, anxiously. "Come and see for yourself."

"And now we must go," said Captain Fordyce, resolutely, "or we shall miss our train. We have been in London for three days, and I am anxious to get back to the ship."

"Good-bye, good-bye," said Nina, reluctantly, "don't forget next week," and she followed him slowly across the street. In the middle of an extremely muddy crossing she stopped to look back. There was a stir along the line of carriages, the Eversleigh's coachman touched the chestnuts with his whip, they started, went a few steps, then stopped again.

"They may be there for an hour yet," said Captain Fordyce, looking over his shoulder, "how would you like to be with them, little wife?"

Despite her certain knowledge that this was bare-faced angling for a compliment, she could not keep the softly spoken words from her lips, "I had rather be with you."



He looked at her from his station on the curbstone, — well-pleased ; for nothing flatters a man so much as the happiness of his wife ; he is always proud of himself as the source of it.

Then giving her a hand to help her beside him, he murmured, “Will you not repeat to me those three little words that you say so often and so prettily ?”

She lifted her glowing face, and, as he bent over her, she whispered against his brown cheek, “I love you !”

THE END.







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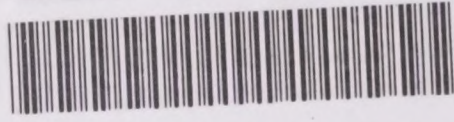








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